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Nepalese Society

MUSEUM GIFT

HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
OF NEPAL
NATIONAL MUSEUM
KATHMANU
1982

SEPTEMBER 1982

Copyright author

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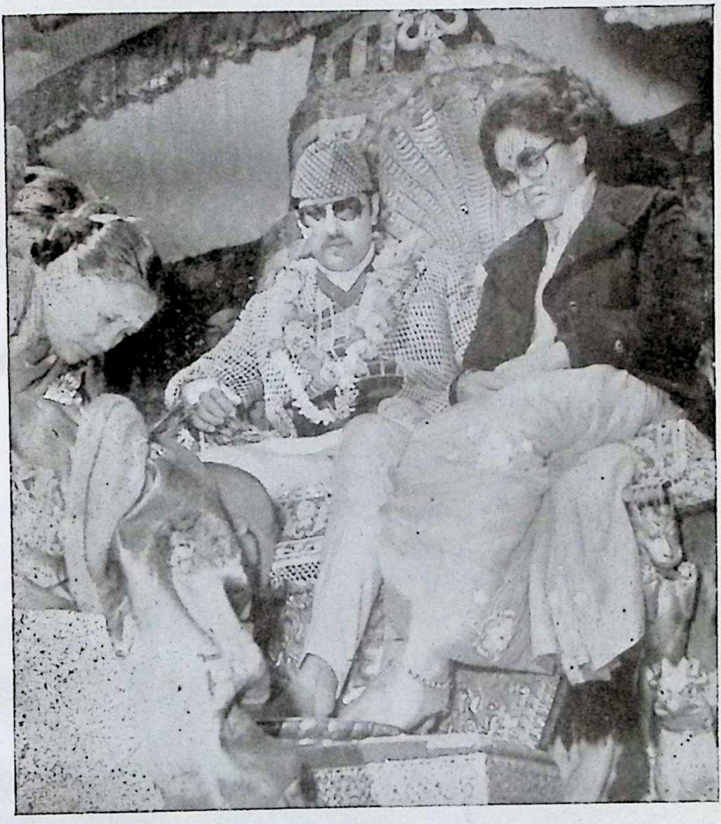
Nepalese Buddhists worshipping Their Majesties according to tradition on the occasion of "Samyak" ceremony.



Nepalese Buddhists worshipping Their Majesties according to tradition on the occasion of "Samyak" ceremony.

DEDICATED

To

THE CROWN

AND

PEOPLE

OF

NEPAL

Preface

I have read with interest the book entitled Nepalese Society written by Mr Pashupati Kumar Dwivedi who is Chief of the National Museum of Nepal. The book, as I understand, is designed as a possible textbook in some appropriate University courses and deals with various elements that, in his view, are important to the main body of Nepalese society that obtains today. Since the political revolution of 1950 a new awareness has come to the nation–an awareness of the variety and unity within and of an increased sense of community with the world without. Many national and foreign anthropologists, sociologists, economists, historians and geographers have contributed immensely to this increased awareness. As a result, thanks to this vast amount of critical literature on Nepal, we can know more about ourselves today if we wish than we could do before the revolution. Much of Nepalese history is a shared experience, a shared experience of war and peace, a shared experience of a hard struggle for existence, a shared experience of the achievement of increasingly integrated and syncretized common culture and art and, above all, a shared experience of common struggle for justice freedom and welfare. Some of it is a separate experience as anthropologists, to an increasing extent, have brought us home. Within a population of over fourteen million and within an area of over 54,000 square miles, Nepal encompasses an unusual variety of people with their own unusual variety of cultures, traditions and manners. They enliven our national life and should not be regarded as obstacles to national integration. As there is no point in disintegrating what has already been integrated in the course of national evolution there is no point in bull-dozing a misguided integration without regard to variety what prevails. Integration achieved with this awareness of and respect for variety is much more rewarding and much more permanent that one achieved by riding rough-shod in haste over the sentiments of a section of our own people. One of the strong points of anthropology is that it incourages studies of communities at depth and encourages respect for their cultures, traditions and manners as a rich part not only of the evolving national culture but also of general human culture.

Mr. Dwivedi's book makes aware of the various communities such as Sherpas, Satars, Tamangs, Jyapus, Brahmans, Kshtriyas, Magars and Gurungs that variegate our nation and of their manners and customs. What kind of attitude to life and death is reflected in their rites surrounding birth, marriage and death ? Common beliefs seem to inspire many of these rites of the communities though they are scattered through the hills and the plains of Nepal.

The subject of the book is culture in the national sense. But the essence of culture is criticism, a criticism designed to elevate and ennoble national consciousness. The book, in my opinion, would have benefited even more if this critical attitude had been more explicitly brought to bear on his 'account of various Nepalese institutions, works of art and the various customs of the communities. I congratulate the author and wish him all success.

Y. N. Khanal.

Kaldhara
September 1982

Foreword

In 1975, on auspicious occasion of the coronation of **His Majesty King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev**, I released the book "NEPALESE SOCIETY". It was very well received. I was much gratified. This fact has led me to improve upon, enlarge and edit the one mentioned earlier. The result is this publication.

The earlier work 'Nepalese Society' contained fourteen chapters about thirteen different ethnic and professional groups amongst the people of Nepal. The present volume is thrice its size. It comprises additional chapters dealing with the Crown and its role in the past and the future, in all aspects covering the spectrum of history, culture, art, architecture, religion etc besides separate chapters on Folk Culture and Folk Art, Development of Religion, Art and Architecture, a brief historical Survey, the land, the people in general, and a comprehensive coverage of ethnic groups.

Since the publication of my earlier work, I have spent much time and energy and money to conduct a thorough survey into all the aforementioned factors and especially on the different ethnic groups constituting the population of the country. I have been able to unearth much more details about it all, with the result, the list of ethnic groups has not only been reclassified under three regional brackets, but many such groups have been dealt with at greater length, while quite a few more have been added to the original list. I hope the reader will find this work a great boon in many ways, if he pursues his learning about the country and its people and their proud and cherished heritage.

I have made a major study of the field at first hand afresh, besides comparing my own findings with the works of no less than twenty eminent writers who have dealt with one or more of the subjects under review here. I have laid more stress on my own findings, wherever they are substantiated by irrefutable records and incontrovertible logic, while at the same time accepting with gratitude, and using as well, the earlier findings and relevant and credible conjectures of the authors mentioned here, in compiling this new volume. The books I have consulted include those written by eminent men and women of different nationalities and times. Their nationalities include Nepalese, Indian, British, Swiss, German, American. Other sources cover a vaster field comprising old diaries and travelogues, the history of Chinese origin, Tibetan context and also western connection.

I am grateful to Prof. Yadu Nath Khanal, an eminent scholar of International repute and a career diplomat for kindly encouraging me by providing valuable suggestions and also gladly accepting to write preface to this book.

Some of the views expressed in this book are in fact the outcome of several conversations with my respected father Pt. Shri Bhagwan Dwivedi who has served with distinction the educational field of Nepal for no less than half a century and has been rightly regarded as one of the pioneers of the educational development at Birganj, Nepal. My father-in-law Late Pt. Bihari Satyal's opinions are also incorporated in some of the topics.

While preparing this book, I have always received the able guidance from Late Lt. Gen. Kendra Shumsher J.B. Rana (1927-1982) and Rani Shri Rajya Laxmi Rana who has always encouraged me and shown parental affections. The untimely passing away of Lt. General Rana is a great loss to me.

The Crown is the fundamental factor of Nepalese nationality and also the life-blood of our national unity. The Crown has made a unique contribution to the safeguarding of emotional integration by unifying the entire country. These deeply rooted basic notions of the nepalese society have by and large always influenced my thinking and I have left no stone unturned to put forth my convictions strongly through this book. I, therefore, feel it a great honour by dedicating this book to the Crown and the people of Nepal.

Thanks are due to all who have helped in the publication of this book. I am also thankful to all other countributors in material collection, interviews and other respect. I humbly request the readers to show sympathetic understanding for several technical defects and short-coming with regard to the scope of subject matter and language due to paucity of space and time. This book could not have been brought in time if my wife Sushila Dwivedi M.A. Sociology, B. Lib. Sc. a library expert and documentation officer, of H.M. G. Department of Mining and Geology had not helped me by working day and night, in arranging the matter and cataloguing all the materials included here.

–Pashupati Kumar Dwivedi

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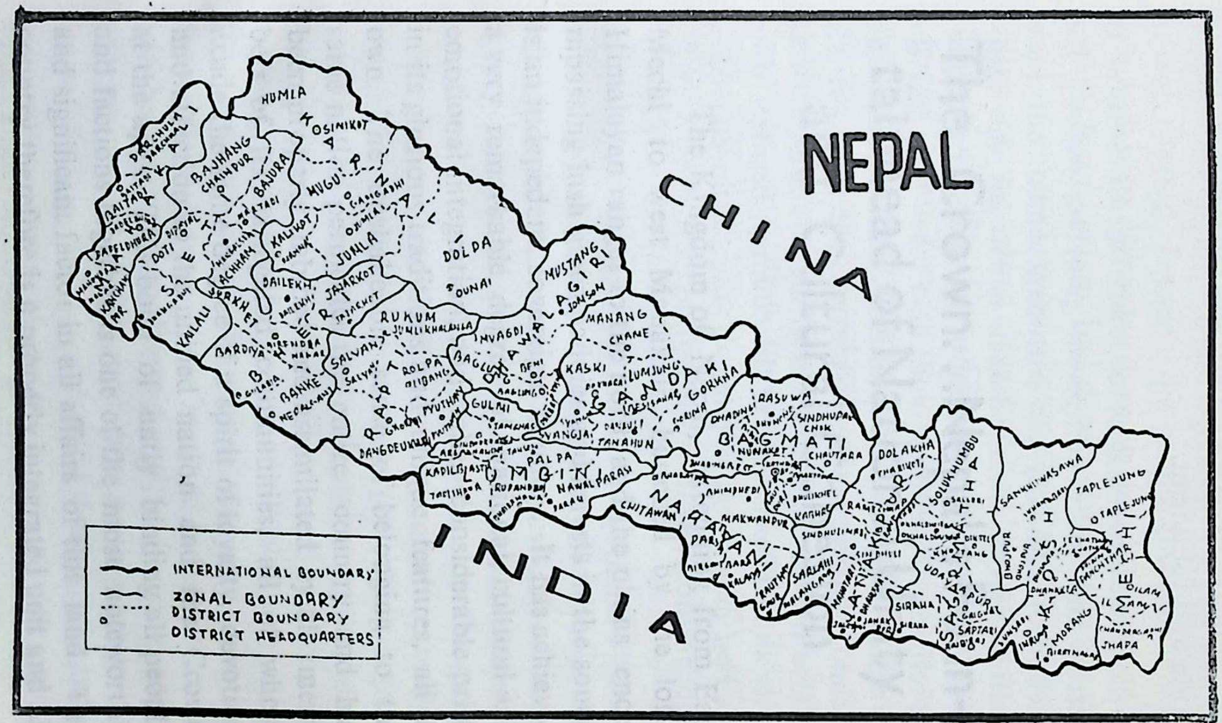
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The Crown...Nepal's Fountainhead of National Unity and Cultural Cohesion

The Kingdom of Nepal, extending from East Mechi to west Mahakali, bounded by the lofty Himalayan ranges to the north and the plains encompassing lush green paddies and forests in the south, is an indepedent, sovereign country. It has achieved a very remarkable degree of national, cultural and emotional integration, and takes considerable pride in its glorious traditions and unique features, all its own. The unshakeable sense of belonging to the same nation permeates the entire country and has been properly imbibed and assimilated by all members of its variegated communities, all of whom exude the same degree of a spirit of loyalty, devotion and affection to the unified nation and the Crown at the apex. This bond of untiy binding all people and factions together is one of the most noteworthy and significant factor in all affairs of this land. The country therefore is a properly integrated unit and all the subjects of Nepal share and cherish a sense of pride and fulfilment.

The monarch is at the helm of all affairs. A better and more competent pilot to occupy the cockpit of authority and patronage could not have been envisaged, endowed as he is with all the traditional qualities and wisdom of the nation, its culture, its religion Hinduism, and also the best in the complex trajectory of political, philasophical and technological vision of the current age as well. He is also the primary guradian of the traditional integrity and independence of the country, besides being the best judge and arbiter of the socio-economic and political rights of the people.

A remarkable feature of Nepal's polity is to be seen in its monarchical traditions from time immemorial. It has been the case all through the country's history although it may be argued that a cohesive and all-embracing framework developed only after the integration of the whole country under one ruler. This happened during the latter half of the 18th century under the leadership of His Majesty King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Great. From that point onwards, the handicaps of a fragmented nation ceased to pose any serious threat to the spirit of nationalism and unity of all its people of different types, since all sections had voluntarily extended the fullest recognition and unqualified loyalty to the rulers of the Shah Dynasty.

It is also a matter of cosiderable significance that whenever the real authority of the ruler had been successfully challenged and effectively curbed, and the direct rapport between the people and their monarch had been disrupted through the intervention of a third force, things had gone badly for the country as a whole, and omens of potential threat to the well-being of everything Nepalese had loomed large on the horizon. The rulers of Nepal, who have all been steeped in this concept of traditional kingship, and whose primary tenet of faith has remained always the immaculate spirit of love and concern for the subjects, as the principle has been handed down from one generation to succeeding generations of monarchs, have successfully fulfilled the task entrusted to them by the keepers of the concept of the kingship in the fullest measure. This tradition has succeeded in surviving in tact all the radical changes which have overtaken the world in general, and what is more important to the domestic context, the people of Nepal have continued to exhibit a tendency in recent times also to hark back with well-reasoned and wisely seasoned nostalgia to the days of total monarchy and its traditions and concept, when applied in toto to the governance of the country. Many are His Majesty's subjects who would prefer to welcome the reintroduction of direct leadership of the Crown in the nation's affairs today, whenever suspicions are aroused in their minds by winds of change of an unpredictable and potentially destabilising nature which tend to disturb and disrupt the peaceful and orderly state of affairs and progress in the country's march towards its goals of progress and modernisation.

The discerning sections of people today are convinced more than ever before that their welfare and prosperity, real, independent and rapid growth of the country are irrevocably linked with the continuance of the rule from the Throne, and leadership in all matters of the King. Optimism prevails in the country about the continued enjoyment of sovereign integrity of the nation owing to the assurance that this sublime relationship between the king and his subjects would survive the challenges and tests thrown up by minor disturbances of a purely political nature, which might inevitably occur from time to time.

Integrating and Unifying Bond Amidst Diversity

Nepal is peopled by different ethnic and occupational groups, most of whom have their own distinct manners, beliefs and traditions. It might sound paradoxical in a superficial manner to assert that even this element of diversity helps the reinforcement of the solid foundations of the concept of the Crown's pre-eminent place in the overall scheme of things, and thus serves the cause of the nation itself in many ways. That is however absolutely true in the case of Nepal's unique and complex entity and all the gamut of its polity, ethos and credo.

Nepalese society rests firmly on this basic fabric and its firm fibre at the core of its structure. The country is inhabited by people of both Aryan and Mongoloid descent. While people of different ethnic groups live today in the cities, there are others who are still inclined to live in forests and on the mountains, the hills and the valleys. Communities, who vary from one another in their respective social customs and traditions, as well as in their psychological make-up, have lived in this country, imbibed with the same degree of affection and regard for Nepal. Their languages too differ. Some speak languages of Indo-European origin, while others speak those which originated from Tibeto-Burman sources. But all of them are bound together by the common and shared sense of national unity. This one factor is the most important one, in both the sociological and political sense. Everything else is of subsidiary significance and relevance only in this context. Irrespective of their descent, original habitat, mother tongue, social customs and traditions, they are all truly integrated subjects of one nation, and are known as Nepalese in the truest sense. All share a sense of national pride, unity and glory. The Crown is the most important factor in this matter too. It symbolises effectively Nepalese Nationalism and is also the fountainhead of its lifeblood and unity. The Crown has made a unique contribution to the safeguarding of emotional integration. It provides the credo where national unity is concerned. All Nepalese are equally loyal to the Crown, and the abiding feeling of belonging to one and the same nation flows from that source and it permeates the ethos of all communities and regions alike.

His Majesty King Birendra, in his address from the throne to the nation, on the occasion of his coronation on 24th February, 1975 had very clearly indicated the relationship between the Crown and the people, in these words:

> **"As the king dedicated himself to further the cause of the people, the people, in turn, dedicated themselves to the cause of the king, in whom they saw the personification of their collective will and identity. This had harbingered the birth of our history, and we are committed to further the great tradition in the years ahead. In our timeless tradition, we have woven with consummate skill a synthesis out of diversities and contrasts in a spirit of harmony and conciliation. Our national culture has remained indigenously indivisible, and in its evolution, it has drawn on a pragmatic basis, the essence of all creeds, whether it be Vaishnavism, Shaivism, the Shakti cult or Buddhist Philosophy. To an enquiring mind, the uniqueness of Nepal's culture lies precisely in the achievement of unity from these diversities and contrasts."**

These foregoing views clearly testify to the validity of the faith that the Crown is fully responsible for providing the safeguards for the well-being of the people, and the people, in turn, are equally responsive to the need for safeguarding the concept of kingship. It can be safely asserted that there is a two-way flow of loyalty and fealty between the Crown and the subjects, just as there continues to be a nexus of mutually intimate ties binding the two together in the most appropriate manner. These factors have been deeply ingrained in Nepal's national psyche and rooted firmly in the soil of its hoary tradition, history and background. The two are inseparable, and will continue to flourish side by side in the years to come too.

The Outcome of the National Referendum Lends Credence to the Theme

If substantiation through mundane means of this unique aspect of the relationship between the Crown and the people were needed, that may be found in a variety of quarters and also deduced from many developments. One such field was thrown up by the last National Referendum. His Majesty King Birendra, during his 1980-State Visit to Great Britain had summed up the outcome of the referendum in these words:

"The partyless panchayat system of democracy received a mandate from our people, who, in a recent referendum voted for its continuation with suitable reforms." The national referendum in fact has reflected **"the political wisdom of the electorate"** and the genuine political acumen of the **"Nepalese Monarch"** in particular. Even a noted sociologist of a foreign country like Professor L. S. Misra of Kanpur University in India has stated that **"the people of Nepal, who being of different communities and ethnic groups, have achieved an emotional integration and their panoramic socio-cultural drama has staged a striking resurgence under the aegis of His Majesty the King".**

Prof. Misra further stated that Nepalese society is largely a tradition-bound one, with ethnic, coreligious ethos, and the monarch is the symbol of social, political and religious unity. As such, he added the people wanted to rally behind His Majesty the King in order to have a well-knit and integrated social order. In Prof. Misra's opinion, the verdict in favour of the Panchayat given by His Majesty the late King Mahendra has been "internalised by the people", who have now reaffirmed it with renewed conviction. He was firmly of the opinion that the verdict of the referendum indicated that the people felt secure at the hands of the partyless Panchayat System on the one hand, and revealed their apprehensions and fears about the "baneful influences" of the multiparty system of government on the other. Pointing out that this political exercise emphasised the benevolence of His Majesty the King, who had offered to the people the opportunity to decide their own political destiny in the referendum, Dr Misra said: "The people also reciprocated with a befitting gesture."

The Concept of the Godhead Vis a Vis the Crown

Religious tradition and monarchical lore of

Nepal had envisaged and legitimised popular belief that the King is also an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There are villagers in very large numbers in the country, who believe implicitly this concept of the Crown and its sacred links with the principal deity. To many others among His Majesty's subjects, the idea serves further to reinforce their confidence and trust in their monarch, which is almost universally endowed in the country with something more than mere political and material significance. His Majesty's opinion itself about this aspect of the interaction and corelation between the traditional monarchy of Nepal and other worldly concepts lacing the throne could be discerned from his replies to the correspondent of a news magazine of the USA, who had interviewed him during mid-1970's. The King had stated that the concept of divine ordination in monarchical affairs, and also the presence of the element of the godhead in traditional kingship have all along been present in the nation's credo. Hairsplitting on this score would indeed render the theme quite unlike what it had always remained, and still continues to. It is an undeniable fact that Nepalese in general perceive the association of God Vishnu with the Crown, and Crown-worship is an abiding passion in our society. This has been the case from ancient times. The fact that this traditional association between a deity and a monarch has endured to this day should in itself serve to justify the soundness and validity of the concept as it was conceived in less materialistic days.

The Guiding Spirit

With the advent in recent decades of a vastly more sophisticated political climate, the Crown has swiftly accepted the challenges of the times and has successfully assumed the chief pilot's role in affairs of the ship of State. His Majesty King Birendra's observations, made during his reply speech at a banquet hosted by Her Majesty the Queen of England and His Royal Highness Prince Philip, in honour of the visiting Nepalese King and Queen, on 18th November 1980, lend much credence to the view. His Majesty, during his speech pointed out various constraints and difficulties facing the country, and said: "In the process, we have not only introduced and implemented a series of programmes of socio-economic development, but at the same time have also adopted a political system designed to bring greater cohesion and unit y among our people".

Similarly, H.M. King Birendra, in his proclamation to the nation at a special function organized on December 16, 1980, at the Royal Army Pavilion, on the occasion of Shri 5 Mahendra Memorial and Constitution Day, once again very emphatically enjoined the people to be diligent, disciplined and united above all else, so that they could really contribute to the efforts afoot in shaping our national economy.

Nepal: A Zone of Peace

Besides all these, enduring peace and stability in both national and international matters have to be ensured, in order to reap a substantial harvest from the development efforts. With this goal in mind, His Majesty had proclaimed his desire to have Nepal recognized as a Zone of Peace, as early as February, 1975, when he was formally crowned King. During Their Majesty's last visit in Great Britain, the King reverted to this theme once again. In London he had observed: "We in Nepal need peace as much for stability as for our socio-economic development. I have therefore proposed that Nepal be declared a Zone of Peace. It is a proposal which seeks the commitment of all nations of the world to the principles of non-interference on the basis of reciprocity". The realisation of its importance is further emphasised by the manner in which a special provision has also been made for the incorporation of the foreing policy objective in the Directive Principles of the Panchayat System to work towards naming Nepal a Zone of Peace, by adopting the basic ideals of the United Nations and the Principles of Non-Alignment in the recent Third Amendment of the Constitution. This is an excellent and timely move, which should help in the achievement of national and international aims as swiftly and smoothly as practicable, while at the same time, enhance the prestige of the Crown and the nation as a whole.

The Crown Probes Every Avenue

Thus we find that the Crown has left no stone unturned in its endeavour to ensure the fulfilment and achievement of the various goals and securing the needs of the Nepalese people. It has invariably succeeded in finding ways and means to place the interests of the country and its people in their proper perspective. Nor has the Crown committed the folly in this context, of forgetting the necessity to ensure the legitimate needs of both the individual and the society as a whole, in proper measure, without detriment to either. It is fully aware that the path ahead is strewn with thorns, as is the case in all developing countries. It is not blind to the danger of overplaying nationalistic and patriotic sentiments either......terms which are prone to be interpreted in divergent and even coflicting ways by interested parties from time to time to suit their unethical and selfish motives. Narrow chauvinism and parochial varieties of either sentiment have been sought to be excluded, lest the vision and focus of the primary goals get blurred and distorted, thereby precipitating conflict and estrangement with otherwise friendly and cooperative countries and governments. Patriotism and nationalism are no doubt commendable attributes. However a distinction has to be made in many instances in order to accommodate a spirit of universal love embracing all mankind, so that peurile and wholly futile expositions of a wearisome nature, often fringing on vainglorious boastfulness may be excluded from our thought and plans.

Like most other affairs, duty is a two-way affair too. The duty of the people here, is to enable the Crown to fulfil its task and carry out its pledges, both at home and abroad. Realisation of our national destiny enjoins us to adopt such an attitude. The Crown is akin to a beacon light in many ways. We in turn bow to it and say:

At the crown's behest,
panic and despair flee,
Making room in the ranks
for stragglers to return
refreshed for work,
Inspiring and praising the brave,
with the return of courage and order.

Folk Culture and Folk Art of Nepal

An element of obscurity shrouding the real meaning of the word 'CULTURE' tends to subject it to mundane interpretations and even aquse of sorts, where terminology used to dissect it is employed. It is very hard to define its true nature and evaluate its influences very accurately. Some tend to equate it with ancient history, while there are others who would rather link it with religion and philosophy. To yet others, culture represents social manners and customs. The modern concepts of sociology, anthropology, ethnology and psychology very often infiltrate the spectrum too, besides the encroachment of ideas and notions related to archaeology, ancient history, traditions of fine arts, literary and linguistic achievements, dance, drama and music. Even the record of engineering and craftsmanship of ages past finds a place in the field. A search for a proper and satisfying definition would prove a hazardous task. Emerson said: "Culture is one thing and varnish another". The latter is a pose, and culture always disdains poses and pretences. Perhaps the best clue to the search should be sought in the Greek word 'eupheria', which means, 'a finely tempered nature'. Human nature is a very complex thing made up of many elements. True culture demands the necessity to discipline elements properly, and raise the sum total to a level of consistency and stability. This alone would ensure the evolution of a properly balanced temperament, after all the excesses have been subdued, and all the angularities straightened out. Swinburn said: "To have read the greatest work of any great poet, to have beheld or heard the greatest works of any painter or musician, is a possession added to the best things of life". One's mind is permeated through such experiences with noble feelings, and life itself acquires 'sweetness and light'. Thought and ideas undergo a process of sublimation, which would enable one to survey the affairs of life, 'calm of mind, all passions spent'. Sorokin in his book, 'Social and Cultural Dynamics' has defined 'culture' thus: "Culture in the broadest sense may mean the sum total of everything which is connected to or arrived at by the conscious or unconscious activity of two or more individuals interacting with one another, or conditioning one another's behaviour". According to him, the changes that have overtaken society constitute the result of the changes undergone by culture. It would therefore appear that according to Sorokin, transition in society and culture are closely interlinked.

Nepalese Culture in Transition

Nepalese culture is undergoing the effects of a transitional phase even now, just as it has been the case at various earlier stages of our history. We are no doubt, inheritors of the past, while at the same time we are subject to the future too. And yet, the past has not vanished from our lives still. This has leant to Nepalese culture its remarkable paradoxical continuity. In western countries, the modern age has imposed a clearly perceptible division between the cultural aspects of religions and its secular counterpart. The fact that no such division occurred in the Nepalese consciousness is crucially important to understand the distinctive spirit of Nepalese culture. It implies a totality of consciousness, continuous in terms of time, and yet impervious to history as an agent of change. It is precisely this complex nature of Nepalese tradition which has to be kept in mind while reinterpreting the basic ethos of the Nepalese people.

Tradition is something more than a set of conscious beliefs or institutions. It is an entire way of life, a stream of existence, whose continuance is sustained by those images, symbols and myths, which an ordinary man may not be able to explain in so many words, but are at the same time, far more important to him than the changes in political systems. Thus history ceases to be an agent of change. It is comprehended within the natural rhythm of change itself.

Folk Culture and the Crown

Nepal a land of numerous villages has its own geo-political and cultural background. Different ethnic and occupational groups of Indo-Aryans and Mongoloid types live in the villages. Each has its own distinctive characteristics. Their language, behaviour, customs, manners, beliefs, tradition, dress, food, appearance, dance; music and cultural propensities are all diverse in content and spirit. The major unifying force in this field of divergent cultural trends is the Crown. Its patronage and unifying influence are most significant. Nepalese folk culture remains basically true to its heritage, even when it is subjected to modern influences. For instance, Sanskrit is still spoken by the Pundits and all religious rites are performed in the Sanskrit medium. The concept of One God amidst a pantheon of many also signifies the unity of many things Nepalese. Unity in diversity has always been an intriguing factor in most of Nepal's affairs, including its culture and religion. Such stolid unity is reinforced and maintained by the salutary influence of the Crown. It has ensured the perpetuation and refinement of Nepalese faith, while retaining the purity of its art and culture.

Folk culture is predominantly found in the life-styles, beliefs and behaviour of the people living in the village. Their songs, customs, rites and rituals are all deeply rooted and anchored in the country's ancient culture. Folk songs are to be seen in this context and in this perspective as the vehicle of the villagers' feelings of a myriad nature, on the emotional plane.

Folk culture serves the purpose of the joint expression of the traditional art and collective social aspects in all ways, of small village communities, which have a closely knit and well-integrated form, which had endured through the ages. It formulates the villages' social structure, folk religion, proverbs, folk literature, folk art, folk songs, folk music and dance and common practices of a variety. It is said that "folk culture is a living thing by which the soul of the nation speaks". It helps to project a picturesque panorama of the villagers' life style, special occasions they celebrate together and also the festivals. So it is obvious that it reflects a true index of the collective expression of the emotions of the people and their art in general, while at the same time its propensities to highlight their ideals and life styles are unsurpassed too. It also enables villagers to retain their faith in themselves, their religion and the future, in spite of material hardships. It ensures their unity and solidarity too in the face of adversities.

Different Forms of Folk Culture

Folk art and a description of it should be the prelude to a study of hand art of Nepal. Art is a major factor in village life in many ways. The dress and costumes worn by villagers demonstrate some of its aspects. The colourful and distinctive stylistic forms of clothes and ornaments lend much insight into this aspect of village life and tradition. The cooking utensils in daily use are no less valuable in a study of this nature.

The Jyapunis of the Kathmandu Valley are always seen in their traditional black sarees, which they themselves weave using traditional looms. Similarly, the Tharus, Satara and Dhimals of the Terai are self sufficient in making most things they require. The domestic cooking utensils and the like used by the Sherpas and related ethnic groups living in the northern mountain regions, exhibit very distinct characteristics, peculiar to them. Most of the items in this category, which are much sought after by modern day tourists come from their anvils. However much room still exists for their proper development and exhibition, which would reflect well on Nepal's folk art and culture still more.

The true qualities and variety of the excellence of the hand art of the Kumal (potters) is amply evident in the beauty and utility alike of the terracotta objects and toys they make. Traditional art forms are exemplified in a variety of objects the Kumaler of Thimi and Bhaktapur make. They include vessels made of clay and utensils used at religious functions. They also specialise in making toys in the shape of animals and birds. Potters belonging to other ethnic groups live in most other regions of Nepal also. Their distinctive styles in potters' art and craft are maintained through the centuries and ages, without much change in form or quality. Each type specialises in particular fields too. The superlative quality and profusion in creation of the products of wood workers, blacksmiths and goldsmiths are equally noteworthy. Every group and sect in the series has managed to retain its glorious traditions in its respective field always, and the same holds good for the products today as well. The aesthetic qualities and traditional characteristics are evident in the works including artistic creations of the wooden windows bearing the 'eye' pattern, frames of many kinds, decorative doors, boxes of several types, containers for oils, ghee, curds etc, utensils in which butter is made, other utensils of domestic use made out of wood and all kinds of agricultural implements.

The stamp of distinctive styles is to be found in the kukhris (national weapon), khuda, daggers, knives and other metal weapons made by blacksmiths belonging to different regions of the country. All such objects bear their own characteristic elegance and are exemplary examples of the art of weapon making, which still retains its original traditoinal imprint.

Many ethnic groups living scattered all over the rural regions are expert weavers and fabricators of materials in every-day use, such as those made from a variety of grass, straw and jute.

Icons constitute another of these series in artistic creations of great aesthetic virtue. They are usually made of stone of many varieties, several metals, horns of wild animals including ivory and also crystal. Their original ethnic qualities are still borne by them in unmistakable ways.

Nepalese coins dating as far back as the

Licchavi reign and extending to the present times are also valuable assets belonging to this field of hand art. The symbols used on the coins tell us much about the art through the centuries.

Nepalese paintings belonging to various schools and different regions and diverse ethnic and religious groups tell their own story in this context. The range covers the Paubha (Tanka), miniature paintings, paintings on walls, floor, and doors, besides decorative designs found in temples and houses on festive occasions, all of which reveal much about the original life styles of people in many places and walks of life, and are made in the best traditions of the country's hand art.

Nepalese musical instruments bear their own distinctive ethnic characteristics too. The same is true in equal measure of work in the field of embroidery, knitting and carpet making. There are many other forms of hand art too, which are equally demonstrative of their original ethnic values and traditions, depending on the ethnic groups who specialised in each field.

Global Recognition For Nepalese Hand Made Objects

It should be wholly evident that Nepalese hand art has a very important place in the history of the country's rich artistic gallery. Its traditions rival that of all others. It is very ancient in vintage and its purity and enduring characteristics through the ages qualify it to hold its own beside all other traditional art forms of Nepal. A very large number of people in the land are engaged even today in upholding its great traditions. There are some special reasons why Nepalese hand art objects are universally recognized as items of rare beauty and quality. They are all primitive in quality, natural, clear, beautiful and invariably show great excellence where sheer quality is concerned. Its living traditions have been further reinforced due to the fact they are not only original and distinctive in quality and texture, but they exemplify their relationship with religion in many ways. Its techniques and popularity would seem to have been revived to a very great extent through the patronage of the Licchavi and Malla rulers of Nepal. This glorious tradition was continued by the great king Prithvi Narayan Shah, after the unification of the nation under his banner during the 18th century. There are many references to the protection and encouragement extended to hand art, in his treatise of teachings, 'Dibya Upadesh'. In this, the king laid much stress on the promotion of cottage industries, and had exhorted his subjects to remain self reliant and always depend on their own effort in most matters. The same tradition is still maintained under the able and dynamic leadership of H. M. King Birendra, who is much interested in development in all ways, and is a great connoisseur of art objects, besides being a protector of our cultural heritage. His Majesty himself is an artist of no mean achievements, and therefore doubly interested in the preservation and promotion of native, ethnic hand art in all its forms. He has offered attractive incentives to artists and craftsmen. In his speech delivered on the occasion of King Tribhuvan Memorial and National Democracy Day on February 18, 1973, the king had laid emphasis on this aspect of the national heritage in these words: "Let letters and science flourish together, with the crafts and skills in different fields of national life, and thereby create a brighter Nepal of tomorrow".

National Museum as Part and Parcel of the Enterprise

It is in the same spirit that had made His Majesty make those remarks that the National Museum of Nepal has undertaken to promote and popularise hand art of Nepal through various means including periodic exhibitions and pamphleteering. It was in this context that on the auspicious occasion of the birthday of His Majesty King Birendra on December 28, 1981, the National Museum invited the Rt. Hon. Brig Gen. Shri Phupal Man Singh Karki, Chairman of the Raj Sabha Standing Committee of Nepal to declare open the exhibition of Nepalese hand art forms, 'Glimpses of the Traditional Hand Art of Nepal', a show comprising the joint collections of the National Museum itself and those of an American researcher studying traditional hand art, Judith Chase. His Majesty the late King Mahendra and his successor H. M. King Birendra are great patrons of the museum movement in Nepal too, and they have done much for the development of existing museums and setting up of new ones in several parts of the country. This should also help the promotion of hand art, besides all other fields in which the museums interest themselves.

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Development of Religion, Art And Architecture

Hinduism took firm root in the Gangetic plane during the first millennium B. C. while Buddhism made its impact felt in the Terai during the 6 th century B.C. Near-total amity existed between the two faiths in Nepal, barring a short interlude, when Brahmanical Revivalism under the banner of Adi Sankara tended to disrupt such fraternal feelings between the two communities, only to be resolved in very quick time. Indian religions and culture had influenced the growth and development of the two in Nepal too. The Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang had substantiated the veracity of both facts in his diary compiled during his tour of the two countries in the 7 th century A. D. The name of the celebrated Indian Emperor Asoka is closely linked with the growth of the Buddhist faith in Nepal, and its spread into Tibet and other Asian countries. It was Asoka who had first espoused the cause of Buddhist evangelism in Asia in the 3 rd century B. C.

The Vedas constituted the basic fabric and inspiration of institutional Hinduism and Brahmanism. They popularised Hindu rites and rituals too. The Hindu religious fold comprises a broad spectrum including theism, or pantheism, monotheism and a kind of atheism. Vajrayana and Tantrist cults are natural off-shoots of the interaction of Hinduism and Buddhism. The cult associated with the Vedas proved to be highly conscious and articulate, and this factor helped much in the supercession of pre-Aryan faiths by Aryan Brahmanism or Vedic Hinduism. It happened between 1500 to 1200 B. C. and the process continued till 500 B. C.'The Rigveda, the first in the series dealt with the elemental deities, Fire (Agni), Wind (Vayu), Earth (Prithvi) and Sun (Surya), as also the King of the Gods, Ekadeva, the supreme Indra of the thousand eyes. Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda followed in that order. Metrical hymnal known as 'Samhitas' was part of the anthology of Vedic scriptures of the earliest days. The efficacy of ritualistic worship was stressed much, and this led to the creation of the all-powerful priestly order, who performed the magical fire sacrifice, while observing all related rites and rituals, which was believed to have the potency to create the world anew and also prevent chaos from overtaking the Cosmos. This became part of the credo of the Aryan community around 900 B. C., and put the seal on the supremacy of Brahmanism. The Upanishads made their appearance towards the close of the Rigveda period. They dealt with the notion of the transmigration of the soul, and became popular during the 6 th to 4 th century B. C. The belief about Karma and Samsara followed in its wake. The god Vasudeva, followed by Vishnu and Shiva entered the picture during the 2 nd century B. C. The Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Eighteen Puranas constituted the classics of that age, and most of their ethos was secular in character. The Bhagavat Gita, an interpolation in the series of later origin proved to be the only notable exception to the secular theme and treatment of the others.

The Chaturvarga theme made an attempt to classify human pursuit and its ends into four compartments: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Caste system found a place in the Aryan community owing to the superiority claimed by the Aryan invaders over the native Dravidians, to begin with. This phase was followed by further divisions in the lateral sense, based mostly on occupation. The Brahmans were the priestly order, Kshatriyas ruled the land and fought their own battles, the Vairyas were land owners, and the Sudras were labourers and servitors. As time passed many of the members of indigenous communities came to be absorbed by the Sudra caste. The enforcement of this system rendered the process of upward mobility of castes and classes an almost impossible proposition. The creation and perpetuation of a large number of people known as the 'untouchables' or social outcasts flowed from the dominance of the caste psyche.

During the reign of the Licchavis (5 th to 8 th century A. D.) Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Buddhism flourished, with the first taking the predominant position. Lord Pashupathi became the guardian deity of Nepal during King Amsuvarman's rule (605 to 721 A. D.). The Mahayana sect of Buddhism, with its popular Boddhisatva concept prevailed over the rival Hinayana sect in course of time, and assumed the dominant role in the Buddhist religious fold. Amsuvarman's predecessor Manadeva I(464 to 505 A D.) was a Shaivite, but he patronised Vaishnavism too. Mahayana Buddhism found much favour with the Licchavi rulers too. Vajrayana's influence on the other religions in Nepal led to a certain degree of dilution of the philosophical and mystic content in religions and also injected the concept of the merger of life and sexuality into the faiths. This aspect has been amply reflected in the arts, architecture and civilization of both the major religions of the country.

The clash between the militant Hindu revivalists under the leadership of Sankaracharya of Kaladi occurred in the 9 th century A. D., and its repercussonsi were widely felt in Nepal too. However unlike in India, where the Buddhists succumbed to the Hindu onslaught during the 11 th century A. D., Nepal proved to be the haven of Buddhists, and all was peaceful and quiet before the close of the 14 th century A. D. Many Buddhists fled India and took refuge in Nepal during that period.

The Buddha Lore And Lumbini Grove

Lumbini Grove, believed to be the birth

place of Lord Gautam Buddha lies in the western region of Nepal Terai. Kapilavastu, the ancient seat of the Sakya ruling dynasty is identified with modern Tilaurkot in the same locality. In 1896, the archaeologist, Dr. Fuehrer made the discovery of a column without its capital, bearing an inscription of great historical value. It stated that Emperor Asoka (he ruled between 272 to 236 B. C.) had passed that way twenty years after he was made king, and had erected the column in honour of the Buddha. There are relics of a few other columns in the vicinity, all erected by Asoka. They resemble closely the handiwork of Indian artists of the 3rd century B. C. In 1933, the German, Ernst Waldschmidt discovered in this region, a subterranean cellar, decorated with sand stone relief, depicting the birth of the Buddha to Queen Maya (2nd to 3rd century B.C. Indian Mathura School work). There was a pool also nearby, and all this is well preserved even today.

The Lumbini Development Committee is engaged in preserving and developing the monuments and relics found here, and also making Lumbini and the outlying area a place for pilgrimage and tourism.

Sidelights on Hindu Mythology

Most religious festivals derive their origin from historical and religious mythology. Nepal's major festivals including Dashein and Tibar are no exception. The former falls during september-October, while the latter is celebrated in November. Their origin may be traced to the strife between the Aryan invaders of India and the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the region. By 1500 B.C., the Aryans had succeeded in routing most of their rivals from northern India, and had become accomplished warriors and specialised in rites and rituals related to religious practice in an institutionalised manner. They identified themselves with the Suras or Gods, while relegating the rest to the status of the Asuras or the Demons. Wars and battles between the two factions constitute the core substance of most of the mythological tales and the basis for the festivals which seek to commemorate the battles and the ultimate triumph of the Suras over the Asuras, which incidentally is linked with the victory of virtue over vice and evil as well. The epics in this context relate the manner in which the gods led by Indra put to rout the forces led by the demon king Mahishasura, with the aid of Adi Shakti, the terrible goddess--- Parvati, Shiva's consort, who later reinstated the Suras of Indra, who were subjugated by the Asuras. Another epic speaks of the war between Rama, the king of the Suras and Ravana, the demon king. Rama performed the puja to propitiate the goddess Durga Bhavani (Parvati), and the goddess helped Rama to vanquish Ravana. The celebrated battle of Kurukshetra fought between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is described in great detail in the Mahabharata.

Evolution of Religion and Art Forms

Most of the works of art reflect the influence of religion, and the former had kept in close step with the latter during the evolutionary stages of both. Artists of the earliest period of Aryan domination depicted the supreme position enjoyed by the primary Vedic deities Indra, Agni and Varuna. As time passed the three came to be relegated by the triumvirate of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, aud it was their turn to adorn the face of art and architecture. In the initial Vedic age, the practice of depicting Vishnu, Shiva, Parvati and Ganesha as deities in attendance on Indra was much in vogue. In his days of glory, as accepted and recorded by artists of many kinds, Indra used to be pictured clad in robes showing the eye motif in profusion, after the thousand eyed god's reputation in this anatomical matter. He also sported a third eye on his forehead, with the difference that his was in the vertical position, while Shiva's third eye was in the horizontal position. Many Indra icons of the era are seen showing him as the highest among all gods and goddesses, presiding over them and attended by the Apsaras. These works of rare splendour and grandeur are extant in India and Nepal. Even after the relegation of Indra from top place, Surya another of the Vedic Titans still managed to hold on to his position, as the centre of attraction of eminent artists of the day. The name 'Aditya' appended to the names of many ruling princes of the age, including the Kirat rulers who were prominent in Nepal then (till the 4 th to 5 th century A. D.) bears out the influence the Sun god asserted on the highest in the land, as well. Fine specimens of those days' artistic creations, with Indra and Surya reigning supreme, are to be found in the National Museum of Nepal, the Bhaktapur Art Gallery and the Archaeological Garden of Patan.

One of the finest images of Vishnu, the next in line of predominance in the field of art, in stone carving is to be found in Changu Narayan. The god is seen in the act of slaying the Asura king Mahabali. It belongs to the 4 th to 8 th century Licchavi period. There are many other extant works of the Vishnu themes in both stone and wood as well. Two exquisite paintings on wood, used as book covers, depict Vishnu Avatars, all ten of them, and show him in the ascending order of the evolutionary ladder, straddling the development from beast to man in stages. The first one is dated 1220 A. D. and is kept in the Bir Library, while the second belongs to the 18 th century. It is found in the Bhaktapur Art Gallery. Two of the most important] incarnations of Vishnu...Krishna and Rama are found in many works of art...paintings, sculpture, and wood and stone carvings. A 1650 A. D. stone carving shows Vishnu in his Anantasayana pose. It is to be found in the Nilakanta temple pond in the Balaju Water Garden. The Museum of Bhadgaon possesses a rare and vibrant image, typical of stone ond wood carvings of the kind, of the demon king Ravana, with ten heads and twenty arms. Among many a Vishnu image found in profusion in all places where art objects of the day are stored, there is one dated 18 th century, in the Archaelogical Garden in Patan. It is a pillar in a truncated state with its socle missing. Chaturbahu Vishnu is its theme, and the relief depicts the four manifestations of god, members of his family. They are Krishna, Balarama, Pradyamna and Anirudha, who reflect the merger of strength, knowledge, honour, fertility, virility and majesty. Each one looks out in the four cardinal directions, the north, the south, the east and the west.

Lord Shiva, if anything overshadows the Vishnu image itself in Nepal, and the large number of art pieces showing him in many poses, and the proliferation of the Shiva Linga theme bear testimony to this fact. The national shrine, Pashupati temple is consecrated in his name. Many of these works show his consort Parvati beside him. Shiva Thandava and the scene showing the slaying of Mahishasura by Durga (Parvati) are the most popular ones among a host of carvings on wood, stone and also sculptures. The museums in Bhaktapur and Lalitpur have a few of these items.

Buddhist Sculpture

Buddhist sculpture and paintings found in Nepal fall under two broad heads: (1) The traditional ones which correspond to the Sakyamuni concept, and (2) the later interpretations of the same, viz., the interdependent and mutually complementary forms of Manushi Buddha (the human incarnations of the Buddha), the Dhyani Buddha (its corresponding cosmic and divine forms) and the Boddhisatva (the disembodied and spiritual nucleus in its unborn and unextinguished forms). There have been to date four Manushi Buddhas with one more to come. It is Maitreya. Each of the Manushi Buddhas has a corresponding Dhyani Buddha and a Boddhisatva companion image to complete the complex pantheon. Most of the extant images take the latter course popular with the Mahayana sect, while the first, the Sakyamuni school has found very little favour. Three of the better known specimens conforming to the Sakyamuni school are: (1) A 9th century piece found in the Archaeological Garden of Lalitpur...a bright and polished blue-grey Limestone carving depicting the birth of Siddhartha; (2) the interlude in Siddhartha's pre-Buddha days of struggle for attaining enlightenment, where he encounters the evil spirit Mara, and (3) a 16th century bronze cast with gilded surface and detachable aureole of Buddha Sakyamuni making a gesture of touching the earth. This one is found in the National Museum of Nepal.

The output conforming to the other more popular variety of Buddhist art forms is much more profuse. A few such may be listed here: (1) A chased and gilded bronze casting of Dipankara, a predecessor of the historic Buddha standing on a lotus flower, with his right palm held up in a protective gesture, is of 17th century origin. It is borne in the inventory of the National Museum of Nepal. (2) The emanation of Dhyani Buddha Virochana, a 14th century piece in bronze with crown and ornaments inlaid with precious stones is to be found among a collection of the same museum. (3) The National Art Gallery of Bhaktpaur exhibits a 19th century painting on cloth of Dhyani Buddha Amitabha in his paradise, Sukhavati. (4) A manuscript of Buddhist Sanskrit text dated 1274 A.D. containing miniatures of Dhyani Buddhas and female Buddhist deities belong to the archives of the Bir Library in Kathmandu.

Stylistic and Chronological Classification

Nepalese art in general as also architecture is classified according to stylistic trends in a chronological order. They conform to a large extent to the rule of various dynasties. They are: (1) The Pre Licchavi period (before 400 A.D.), (2) The Licchavi period (5th to 8th century A.D.), (3) The transitional period between the Licchavis and the Mallas (6th to 10th century A.D.,) (4) the early Malla period (11th to 14th century), (5) The late Malla period (15th to 18th century.), and (6) the Shah period (beginning mid–18th century).

Pre-Licchavi Period-before 400 A.D.

A few terracotta figures kept in the Archaeological Department in Kathmandu are representative of this period's art forms. They belong to the Tilaurkaut region, believed to be the original site of the Sakya dynasty, which was in ruins for the last 2000 years following the sacking of the city in a war. Figures of human beings and animals are made by hand in baked clay with ornaments put in place as a separate embellishment. The colour of baked clay varies from pink, yellow, red and grey to brown. Indented leaf patterns made before baking the clay are impressed on the images of a ram and a horse. Another piece consists of five Medieval ornamental, heavy, yellow baked clay bricks removed from the ruins of a temple in Lori Kudan in the district of Taulihawa.

The Licchavi Period–5th to 8th century A.D.

Stone was used for the first time to make sculptures during this period. Bir Library appears to possess the first of this kind. It is a 4th to 5th century A.D. statue of a Kirat king, made in grey lime stone. It could however be a Surya idol also. Idols of many Hindu gods and goddesses form the major attraction of themes in this period. Some of these works bear close similarity to similar pieces made in India during the Gupta period, the Golden Age of Indian art of many kinds. The primary difference between the two being the fact that Nepalese pieces have tended to idealise the form of tne concept of features and face of the subjects according to local predilections.

The Transitional Period–6th to 10th century A.D.

Four sculptures of this period may be cited as being typical of the period and the stylistic trends which run parallel to the creations of the Pala School of Indian art. The Archaeological Garden of Lalitpur has a greenish grey lime stone carving (8th to 9th century A.D.) showing Shiva and Parvati in a cave on Mount Kailas in a happy state of union, surrounded by members of their family. It also possesses a brightly polished blue-grey lime stone carving depicting the birth of Siddhartha. The National Museum of Nepal has a standing image of Tara, a female

Redeemer, made out of stone. The concept is adapted from the tenets of the Vajrayana sect of Buddhism. Another belonging to the same school of art and age is the standing image in stone of Boddhisatva Padmapani, near Ghata-Vihara in Kathe Simbu street in Kathmandu.

The Early Malla Period-11th to 14th century.

The Malla kings of Kathmandu were great patrons of arts, and were resopnsible for the creation of a distinctive Nepalese style, relatively independent of the influence of famous Indian schools of art like the Pala, Mathura and Sena variety, which had dominated the Nepalese scence till around the 13th century, when the Golden Age of Indian art had reigned supreme in this region, with the formidable patronage leant to it by the Gupta kings of India. Lime stone carvings, gilded bronze images and miniature paintings on wood used as book cover constituted the major contribution to the output of art objects in Nepal during the period.

The Late Malla Period-15th to 18th century A D.

The development of the distinctive Nepalese style in art continued during this period also. Kathmandu, under the Malla kings became the centre of cultural and scientific exchanges with Tibet and East Asia. In Lhasa there were Nepali Newari colonies, and their work in metal and wood was highly prized objects. Certain peculiarities distinguished a whole group of sculptures in stone and work on wood during the 15th and 16th centuries. The figures were squat and powerful looking while the faces were Mongolian. A typical work of this kind is the 1417 A.D. Vishnu stele in grey lime stone, kept in the Archaeological Garden of Lalitpur. Four wood carvings also reflect the same characteristics. They have religious themes for their inspiration and are the property of the Bhaktapur Museum.

The next stylistic phase begins around the 17th century, when a certain degree of stiffness in the sculptures tend to replace the earlier property of naturalness of movement. They also appear to have acquired a slight handicap of a fixed form, tending to repeat itself in various objects, where the theme and style in execution are concerned. The capacity to give free experssion to artistic imagination and fluidity and plasticity of form and motion seems to have left the artists. The Bhaktapur Museum has many examples of this type of art objects of the 17th to 18th century period.

As if to make amends for this fall in standards in some respects, some other specimens exude a charm and impressiveness of their own. One may cite the pleasant and placid looking 16th to 17th century wood carving in high relief depicting the fused Shiva-Uma cencpt...the property of the Bhaktapur Museum. A baroque piece, an ivory carving of Bhrngin, Shiva's attendant is seen dancing and drumming in a very animated fashion. It belongs to the same period and is kept in the National Museum of Nepal.

Elaborately carved ornamental items like mirrors and caskets of this period bear ample testimony to the influence exerted on Nepalese artists at that time by Central Asian Sino-Tibetan counterparts.

Tantrist Influences

Tantrism had influenced art forms in Nepal quite significantly. The primary quality in such products is the induction of erotic overtones mixed judiciously with religious themes and rituals. A certain degree of gruesome and fearsome fringes mark some art objects of the Tantrist variety too, while there are plenty of pleasant pieces as well, to make the gallery a very varied and vivid one.

PAINTING

Religious and social customs and special occasions such as anniversaries served to inspire and also necessitate the creation of paintings. The earliest extant works belong to the 10th- 12th century A.D. Two typical examples of miniature paintings of this period are Prajnaparamita (920 A.D.) and Nisvasa Tantra (1060 A.D.). Both are palm leaf manuscripts with wooden covers bearing the paintings.

The Vaishnava tradition in painting commnced in the 13th century A.D., and a picture of Lord Vishnu on a wooden book cover of that period serves as a typical item.

Miniature paintings possess a very finite perimeter, and also allows much room for the artist to exercise his own indepenedent predilection relating to the concept of the theme and subject, irrespective of the fact, he uses a model for the purpose, or does the work without the aid of such live or inanimate models.

Painting on the palm leaf medium started during the 12th century A.D. and continued well into the next. Typical examples may be seen in the manuscript, Astasahasrika, which contains pictures of Manjusri and Mahamanjusri.

Paintings of all these types on palm;leaf, wood, paper or cloth are done in opaque, grounded in water and mixed with gum. This type of work is known as gauches.

Such miniature paintings began to lose some of their popularity during the 13th century, and two other kinds known as Mandala and Pata came into their own, but neither possessed the same degree of finite quality in perimeter as the miniature paintings, and neither type permitted the artist anything like the same degree of freedom for the exercise of their creative genius, since all the pictures were meant for a particular purpose, based on specific themes and subjects, mostly of a religious nature.

Pata paintings show even less rigidity in the style, and the lines assume a cursive course to a greater extent than even Mandala pieces. The Tibetan variety of Mandala and Pata paintings are done on fine silk cloth, while their Nepalese counterpart is executed on coarse cloth invariably.

The 14th and 16th century period proved to be the most successful one with the most prolific output for the Pata style in painting; with most of the themes coming from books of instruction about Tantric cult. They are of a descriptive and illustrative kind, and are seldom seen in public, since most of the output was meant for private study, and therefore stored away in the custody of the practitioners of the cult.

Dilli Raman Regmi Kalyani Regmi Memorial Library
Kathmandu, Nepal
1997

The Paubha style is very well known in Nepal, and its popularity was at its height during the 16th century. They are done on cloth, and wooden rollers are attached at the top and the bottom, in order to facilitate easy storage in the rolled up form. This style had been subject to much influence from the Rajasthani, Tibetan and Chinese works of the kind.

The 18th century paintings of Nepal had assimilated much of the spirit and style of Rajasthani, Persian and European Renaissance work of the era. They usually took the form of descriptive scrolls with a profusion of detail and characters. Just as Rajasthani pictures of the kind found their way occasionally into the interior wall illustrations in the Ajanta Caves in India, a wall painting in the Bhadgaon Palace has for its source a painting of Nepalese origin of this period.

Around the year 1800 A-D. paintings on paper began to find favour with the upper classes as replacement for the Tankas. These were framed in glass and wood, but their popularity waned quickly. The National Art Gallery of Bhaktapur has two typical works of this kind. One depicts a display of dancing and music in heaven before Indra. The style is reminiscent of Indian court festivals. The other shows Shiva accompanied by his consort Durga and son Ganesha.

ARCHITECTURE

The rulers belonging to the Licchavi Dynasty (400–750 A.D.) had built for themselves residences and buildings for their governments, side by side. They were wood, brick and mortar structures, most of which have failed to withstand the ravages of time and weathering. However records including Chinese chronicles establish the fact. Three such building complexes had proved most remarkable. Manadeva 1 built Managriha, Amshuvarma constructed Kailashkut Bhavan, aud Narendradeva built Bhadradhivas. None of the three is extant.

The Malla Kings of Kathmandu Valley, who followed the Licchavis, had been responsible for the construction of beautiful Palaces during the 14th to 18th centuries, all of which are found to be in excellent condition today. There are well laid out yards or squares in front of the palaces. They house temples, shrines, images and idols of deities, pillars, baths and fountains, and lend much charm to the building complex. The same holds good in the case of the old palaces found in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon, built during the same period.

Chaitya and Pagoda Style

The oldest structures in the Kathmandu Valley conform to the mores of the Chaitya style in construction. They include the five stupas (one is not extant today) in Patan. They have plain earth and brick domes. The plinth also is made of the same materials. There is a chapel atop each. Decoration and ornamentation have been almost completely avoided.

Both the famous Buddhist stupas at Swoyambhunath (5th century A.D.) and Bodhnath (17th century A.D.) show much influences of Tibetan concept and precept. Both have pagoda style temples built around them. The stupas themselves are constructed in the Chaitya style.

Miniature stupas found elsewhere in Nepal (5th century A.D.) are known as Chaityas, and have the same design and mode of execution as the major stupas htemselves.

The pagoda style certainly had for its inspiration its Indian counterpart to start off with, but had been developed over the years in Nepal by indigenous architects and builders, into something which could be classified as essentially Nepalese. It antedated the pagoda style construction of Tibet and China, which had evidently been built under the influnce of the Nepalese structures of this type.

The typical Nepalese style in the pagoda category of construction is observed in the famous Nyatapol temple of Bhadgaon. It also represents the style of temple construction in general, found in Nepal. It is a 17th century structure with five roofs and six storeys like in the case of many others of its kind. The base of these temples have terraced platforms made of stone, and have as many stages or folds as there are storeys. The topmost roof of the Nyatapol temple is of gilded copper. Each roof is supported by struts projecting at 45 degree angle from entablature resting on pillars of the storey immediately below. The other examples of this style among the more important and better known constructions are the temples of Changu Narayan and Matsyendranath. The latter is located in Patan. The Pashupathianth and Guhyeshwari temples belong to the pagoda style structures too. The former was constructed during the 6th century.

Decoration and Ornamentation

Cornices over the windows or doors, lintels, sills, beams, struts and brackets supporting the roof projections and eaves overhanging the walls in all such structures are decorated-with floral arabesques or images of deities. The square shaped windows are screened with finely wrought frame or trellis. They assume a slightly slanted angle in relation to the framework. The main doors in some instances are topped with images of deities and copper finial. The golden gates of the Bhadgaon palace and the doorway of the Changu Narayan temple are capital examples of this style. The interior of such buildings are ornamented with finely carved woodwork. Many temples, palaces and private homes have much the same pattern for their architecutural base.

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A Brief Survey of Nepal's History

There is no reliable and authenticated record about Nepal's history before the 5th century A.D., when rulers belonging to the Licchavi Dynasty established their rule. However William Kirkpatrick has compiled a documented version of events and personalities of a much earlier era from chronicles known as the Vamshavalis, which were presumed to have been of 14th century origin. Kirkpatrick himself had visited Nepal in 1793. Popular belief has it that either Vishnu or Manjusri was responsible for converting the huge lake that Kathmandu Valley was, into a habitable terrain, by draining out the water through a gorge he blasted in the side of the mountain, which encircled the Valley. Ne Muni founded the first dynasty here. His successors are known as the Gopalavamshis, who ruled for 500 years. The Gopalavamshis were succeeded by the Mahisapalavamshis. Then it was the turn of the conquering Kirat rulers from the east to establish their reign in the Valley. They ruled for 1500 years before being replaced by the Licchavis. Opinion is divided about when exactly the Licchavis became rulers. But it is certain that they had firmly established their dynastic rule in the 3rd century A.D. and continued to reign supreme till 750 A.D. The Thakuris and the Early Mallas replaced them at the helm of affairs and their writ ran between 750 A.D. and 1480 A.D. The Mallas followed suit and ruled the Valley between 1480 A.D. and 1768, when the Shah Dynasty took over from them. Nothing much is known about the influence exerted by the Kushan Empire in India during the 1st and 2nd century A.D., the Maurya Empire during the 3rd and 4th century B.C., or the Nanda Empire during the 4th and 5th century B.C. There is some doubt about the accuracy of the belief about Emperor Asoka's visit to Kathmandu Valley and the dates relating to it. But it is generally believed that he visited Nepal and Kathmandu in the 3rd century B.C., and did erect the 5 stupas in Patan. Popular belief also credits his daughter Charumati with the construction of the Buddhist monastery at Chabahil near Deo Patan. Buddhist literature contains many references to the Licchavi and Malla rulers, who when they were kings of Vaisali and Papa, were not only contemporaries of the Buddha, but were also the neighbours of the Shakyas of Kapilavastu. However recorded history made its appearance only several centuries later. The Licchavis reappeared in Indian inscriptions and on Indian coins during the reign of Chandragupta I and Samudragupta during the 4th century A.D. Epigraphy and numismatics, which contributed much towards further clarification of historical facts, made their debut on the scene only during the second half of the 5th century A.D. Matters improved still further from the beginning of the 10th century, with the arrival of colophons, which seved to link the names of the rulers with the exact dates of their reign. This period was followed by a later one when more detailed and accurate historical data came to be recorded in private individuals' diaries, documents found in foreign lands and travellers' accounts of men and events. Strong ties were established between India and Nepal during the Licchavi reign between 400–750 A.D.

Manadeva I, who ruled between 464–505 A.D. was the first ruler of Nepal to leave behind him inscriptions and coins, which throw much light on historical facts. The first ever inscription of the kind is to be found at Changu on the Changu Narayan pillar. Autonomous feudatrories offered much challenge to Manadeva's ambitions to establish total control over the region, but he did manage to keep them on leash, whereas his immediate successors were forced to yield some ground in the matter to the resurgent force of the feudatories, with the result that Gupta co-rulers shared power from time to time, leading to the emergence of Amsuvarman, a Thakuri Minister and son-in-law of King Shivadeva (590–604 A.D.) as co-ruler and later ruler.

During the 7th century A D. Tibet came to exert much influence in Nepalese affairs. It began with the rule of the great Tibetan king Srong-btsan Sgam-po

(620–649 A.D.), who laid the foundation for the mighty Tibetan empire. Amsuvarman's successor Dhruvadeva, who was forced to share his throne with Jishnu Gupta of the Gupta family, made room for Narendradeva, who, with the help of his Tibetan allies put an end to this practice, by subduing the feudatories. He ruled between 685–701 A.D., and established firm ties with China too. Historians are strongly divided about the extent of Tibetan influence and control over Nepalese affairs during the 7th–9th centuries, as also the veracity of lore crediting Amsuvarman's daughter Bhrikuti, who some claimed had married the Tibetan ruler, with the spreading of Buddhism in Tibet at a time when Animism and Shamanimism were the religions of that land. Some authorities like Prof. G. Tucci of the Ismeo Institute of Rome, and author of the article entitled 'The Wives of Srong-btsan Sgam-po' in Orient Extremus (1962) refute its veracity, while those like Sylvain Levi, author of 'Le Nepal Etude Historique D'un Royaume Hindou' and Ernst Waldschmidt, who authored...Art Treasures from the Himalayas' subscribe to the truth about it all. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan–tsang has recorded much fact about the period in his notes during his visit to Nepal in 637 A.D. The old history of T'ang Dynasty of China also sheds some light on the state of affairs prevailing then. The Tibetan Empire collapsed in 842 A.D., during the rule of gLang–dar–ma. Owing to such conflicting records and claims, based very often on national predilections, it is hard to make any firm assertion about how far the influence and control of

Tibet had gone, just as it is impossible to ascertain for sure how much control the Guptas of India exerted over Nepal. Confusion prevails about the degree of Chinese influence over Nepal too, after Narendradeva established diplomatic links with Peking during the closing stages of the 7th century. Opinion is also divided about the exact political boundaries of Nepal at the end of the Licchavi rule. However, it would be safe to assume that its extent around mid–8th century A.D. was confined more or less to the Kathmandu Valley, as had been the case during the pre–historic reign of the Gopalavamshis and the Mahisapalavamshis.

Nepalese Chronology

An important event of the 9th century was the establishment of an exclusively Nepalese chronology, with the year 879 A.D., being counted as the first year. The Malla rulers reckoned dates in accordance with this Nepalese Era, and the tradition is still extant. The designation of its starting point as the year of the Sri–Sripasupati–bhattaraka in the geneological table, Vamshavali would seem to indicate that the inauguration was brought about by an event connected with the national shrine of Pasupatinath. Some sources are of the view that an offering was made there in that year to commemorate the total liberation of Nepal from the disadvantageous links with Tibet. The era is known as the Newari or Nepali Samvat, and was instituted by King Raghavadeva.

Post–Licchavi Decline

For a couple of centuries after the decline of the Licchavis, set backs beset the country. The immediate post–Licchavi period might as well be termed the later Licchavi period or the Thakuri period. However this period ends in 1200 A.D. with the advent of the early Mallas. Disintegration and fragmentation of territory marked this period of decline, and even the early days of the regular Malla reign commencing 1480 A.D., during the last two years of King Jayaksha Malla (1428–1482 A.D.), witnessed the continuation of the same pattern, with the ruler dividing the Valley into three independent territories between his sons……Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon were the three units. Historical records are ample about the 17th and 18th century A.D. At the beginning of the Malla period, Sanskrit was the only written language. But gradually, Newari language came to be used for the land records and some technical data. The same was the case with writing on copper plates and stone too. The majority of people of the the Valley were Newars, of mixed Mongoloid origin, and they spoke Newari, a language of Tibeto–Burman descent. Its script is very different from Indian lettering of the same period, and had an independent provincial style about it. This development is a positive indication of the drifting apart of Nepal and India, in the wake of the 13th century Muslim invasion and conquest of India, and subsequent destruction of Buddhism and partial suppression of Hinduism in the Gangetic plains. Nepal had to contend with the invasion too, but it never took the form of prolonged occupation or Islamisation here. One of the Muslim raids was led by Sultan Shams-ud-din-Ilyas in the year 1346, and the event is recorded in the inscription on the great stupa of Swoyambhunath, in Kathmandu. The inscription was made during its restoration after it was damaged earlier by the invaders.

Principalities Lying Outside the Valley

During the 15th century, the western region of Nepal, lying outside the Kathmandu Valley itself, had no less than 78 autonomous and semi-autonomous principalities. Among them were the most important and independent clusters known as the Twenty–four Principalities of Gandaki region of central Nepal, and further to the west lay the Twenty-two Principalities of the Karnali region. Both were perpetually engaged in feuds and fighting between themselves. The kingdoms of Kumaun and Garhwal, the Twelve Principalities and the Eighteen Principalities also belonged to this region. Most of them being relatively small units, they recognized the supremacy of some of the more powerful ones. To the south-east, the kingdoms of Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Vijayapur held sway, while the Kirats in the eastern hill region formed part of the kingdoms of Chaudandi and Vijayapur, which had their capitals in the Terai. It was this perpetual state of flux that paved the way for their subjugation and later unification of all Nepal by the Gorkha rulers, a task which they completed by the end of the 18th century.

The Ruling House of Gorkha

The House of Gorkha originated in the Twenty-four Principalities. Dravya Shah (1551–1570) established the kingdom of Gorkha through conquest and set up his seat in the town of Gorkha, lying halfway between Kathmandu and Pokhra. All the rulers of the two clusters of principalities claimed their descent from the Rajput ruling families of India, and are believed to have fled India before the invading Muslims, during and immediately after the 14th century. It was Prithvinarayan Shah (the Rajah of Gorkha since 1743, who later became the king of Nepal from 1769–1775, following the conquest of most of the regions comprising modern Nepal), the ninth generation descendant of Dravya Shah, and the tenth in the line of the Shah rulers of Gorkha, who set about the task of absorbing principality after principality, and kingdom after kingdom, through a great and protracted military campaign, leading up to the siege of the Kathmandu Valley itself, who turned out to be the architect of the consolidation of all Nepal under one ruler, a feat he achieved by the time he died in 1775. The grand design concluded on a triumphant note with the conquest of the Valley. Kathmandu and Patan fell to him in 1768 and Bhadgaon fell during the next year, Kathmandu became the capital city of Nepal.

During and after the conquest of Kathmandu Valley, the Gorkhas had to fight the British successfully, and also the Sikh warrior King Ranjit Singh in the Punjab, who turned them back from their thrust westward.

Advent of the Rana Oligarchy

The Shah Kings reigned supreme till September 15, 1846, when one of the courtiers and generals, Jung Bahadur Rana became the first in a line of all-powerful Rana Prime Ministers of Nepal, who established their rule over Nepal for over a century, rendering the king an ineffective symbol at the top. Jung Bahadur captured the reins of power and authority on the morning after the infamous Kot Massacre, and proceeded systematically to establish the control of the members of the Rana family. However after his death on February 25, 1877, his kinsmen manipulated the exile and assassination of most of Jung Bahadur's direct lineal descendants, and grabbed power. They came to be known as the Shamsher Ranas. But they persevered in extending respectful recognition to the founder of the Rana Oligarchy by assuming the suffix JBR (Jung Bahadur Rana) to their name. They retained the title and prerogatives, Jung Bahadur had acquired from the king, of Shri 3 Maharaj and ruler of Kaski and Lamjung.

During the Rana period, Nepal was engaged in several military and diplomatic sallies within and without its boundaries, and the encounters in either field included adversaries and allies ranging from the British in India, the. Tibetans, the Chinese and, nominally even the Russians in Lhasa. It redounds to the Ranas' acumen and capabilities that in spite of their having been in many ways less than fair to many others in the land, they successfully retained the independence of Nepal, and even succeeded in expanding its horizons in the international political spectrum. They were involved in the Great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 in India on the side of the British rulers of that country, and also made substantial contributions to the British war effort in two world wars. They also succeeded in securing the return of some territories in the Terai from the British in India, who had earlier forced Nepal to part with them. Their rule ended in February, 1951, when Mohan Shamsher Rana was eased out of the prime ministership, by a united Indo-Nepalese movement under the leadership of H.M. King Tribhuvan, who assumed office immediately as the supreme sovereign of Nepal.

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Nepal — The Land and the People

“As if by magic, a picture of fairy tale beauty, which as is not to be found anywhere else in the world opened up before me......here, I had a view from a distance of the most magnificent mountains on earth, Gauri Shankar, Kanchen Junga and Dhaulagiri, the noblest background imaginable in front of which Great Nepal, the fertile valley of the Bagmati river, with the capital Kathmandu lay at my feet. These dazzling whitep eaks on the horizion were beginning to glow in the last rays of the setting sun, and my eye was caught by the shimmering gold spires of temples down below, and there I saw countless towns and village nestling in the midst of well cultivated fields.” This is how the mountaineer and explorer Dr. Kurt Boeck described the scene he beheld from one of the mountain passes on the Chandragiri (8,500 feet high), when he saw Kathmandu Valley for the first time. He was on a four-week visit here in 1898.

Modern Nepal is about 54,000 sq. miles in area.. some 500 miles long and 100 miles broad on an average. Its population is in the region of 13.5 million. Its scenic splendour is unsurpassed. Nepal occupies a third part of the 1500 mile-long Himalayan mountain stretch. It takes up the central part of it, and its share is the loftiest, with Mt. Everest or Sagarmatha on the Nepal-Tibet border being the tallest (29,028 ft). Kanchanjunga (28,168 ft), Annapurna (26,391 ft) and Dhaulagiri (26,797 ft) are others in the league.

Below the 'land of snow' to the south lies the Terai (wet land), a strip of level land, which is shared by Nepal and India.

Nepal is completely land-locked. Four mountain ridges running parallel to one another in the north-south direction constitute the most striking feature of the longitudinal topography, bounded on the east by Sikkim and on the west by the Kumaun Hills. India lies to the south and Tibet and China to the north. The latitudinal divisions are the handiwork of the Mahabharat and Siwalik mountain ranges, which demarcate regions in a natural manner into the High Highlands, the Mid-montaine region, Inner Terai and Outer Terai. The Siwalik ranges are about 4,500 to 6,000 feet high, and 5 to 20 miles wide, while the Mahabharat ranges are 10,000 feet high and 10 miles wide. An intricate pattern of river network constitute the typical landscape of the entire region. The major rivers all of which flow into the

Brahmaputra River, originate in the Tibetan region, while the rivers flowing through the Kathmandu Valley have their source in the mountain ranges surrounding the Valley itself. The Valley is situated at a height of 4,500 feet above sea level. The Terai plain is hot and humid, but fertile and help the country grow most of its foodgrain crop there. As one proceeeds northward, the climate also undergoes a marked change, with the height of each region from the mean sea level determining the summer and winter temperatures.

The People

The people of Terai resemble those of neighbouring India, while those living in the mountainous part of Nepal are mostly of Mongoloid origin, the most prominent of this type being the Sherpas, who live in small settlements, some 10,000 feet up in the highlands. They are excellent mountaineers.

The majority of the people live in the valleys, one of the most beautiful of these being Pokhara, 100 miles to the west of Kathmandu, and 3,600 feet above sea level. Clear mountain lakes lie embedded in verdant fields surrounded by beautiful hills, from where one can get a clear view of mountain peaks like Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. Kathmandu Valley, which is narrower is more densely populated. It is also known as Kantipur and Kasthamandapa. The fertile valley has an area of 418 square miles, and is 20 miles long. It is encircled by mountains 10,000 feet high. It houses 5 percent of the country's entire population, while its area accounts for only 0.4 percent of the total area of Nepal. People of Mongol, Indian and Tibetan origin live here. Newars form the majority among the people of Kathmandu.

The average density of the country's population is 200 per sq mile, with very great variations in density occurring from region to region. The Terai accounts for some 18 percent of the area. It is 500 miles long and 20 miles wide Nearly 35 percent of the total population live here. The density of population here is nearly 500 per sq. mile. It covers more than 60 percent of Nepal's cultivated land area and produces the same portion of its total food produce in percentage terms.

The middle belt of mountains and valleys between the high Himalayas and the Mahabharat Lekh has a population density of around 160 per sq. mile. The highlands and the trans-Himalayan valleys are sparsely populated, with just about 25 per sq. mile. Rainfall and arability of land determine the density of population in most cases. The eastern half which is fortunate in both matters have 75 percent of the country's total population.

Ninety-five percent of the people are agriculturists, while trade and business take up the attention of a mere 0.1 percent. Industrial labour absorbs 2.2 percent and government services 2.7 percent.

The Mid-montane region's population is consisted mainly of Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars and the occupational castes. The rest of this region's people are Kirats, Tamangs, Magars, Sunwars, Jirels, Gurungs, Thakalis, Panchgaunles, Chepangs and the Kusundas.

The northern border people are Sherpas, Thodan, Topka Golas, Bhotes, Lopa, Baragaunle, Dolpo, Manangba or the Nyeshang and the inhabitants of Larke. These are all of Mongoloid origin and relatively recent immigrants from Tibet.

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Ethnic Groups Among People of Nepal

The great majority of the people of Nepal, with some exceptions live in specific geographic regions. The Tibetan speaking Mongoloid people live in the high Himalayan regions of the north, which enjoy an Alpine climate at altitudes of between 8,000 and 16,000 feet. The attractive mountain valleys immediately to the south are occupied by various Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan speaking hill and valley people at altitudes between 3,500 and 7,000 feet. The climate there is cool-temperate. Nearly 60 percent of the people live there. At altitudes between 1,000 and 2,500 feet lie the stretch of land which consists of the low river valleys and unhealthy forest belts inhabited by various indigenous people, whose origins are not as clearly traceable as yet, as those living to the northern terrains. It is less densely populated than the region immediately to its north, as is also the case with the high Himalayan terrain in the northern-most sector. The Inner Terai and the Outer Terai regions lie in the southern-most region.

It is the most fertile and account for no less than 35 percent of the population. The climate is tropical savanna with summer monsoon. The people there consist of various Indo-Aryan language speakng types with a few indigenous types like the Tharus and Dhangars. The people living near the boundaries of the country have better and easier access to countries bordering on Nepal. Their language, manners and customs have therefore been influenced by such elements, whereas those in the inner belt had much less contact with outsiders. Most of them speak the national language Nepali, which is spoken by some 51 percent of the people all over the country. Maithili is the mother tongue of 12 percent and most of them are found in the eastern Terai, where the Bhojpuri speaking people who account for 6.1 percent of the population also live. The other important languages or dialects spoken are: Tamang (5.5 percent), Awadhi in the west Terai (4.7 percent), Tharu (4.3 percent), Newari (4 percent), Magar (2.7 percent) Rai, (2.6 percent), Gurung (1.7 percent) and Limbu (1.5 percent). There are another 15 dialects spoken by less than one percent of the total population each. Most of them are spoken by various numerically small ethnic groups.

Classification of most of the people of Nepal within the parameters of theoretical ladders or within the ambit of hastily and unnaturally created vertical social ladders is a grossly misleading and inaccurate practice. The study in the field is still incomplete, and according to Professor Guiseppe Tucci, the famous Tibetologist and one of the authorities on Nepali history and religion, "the ethnological study of Nepal, despite the many researches undertaken, is still one of the most complex in the world". However the Hindu caste system and Brahmanical traditions and habits have exerted much influence on most people, so much so, people outside the caste system like Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus, Tharus etc, are inclined to rank themselves within the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy thereby seeking a realtively high position near the Chhetris, who rank second in the order below the Brahmans.

The classic four-fold caste-class gradations influence most of the people. But the hill people and the Nepali in general differ in some ways from the plains people in this respect. The role behaviour, occupational limitations and mate-selection proscriptions, as well as the patron-client relationships are less clearly defined in their case, and therefore less rigidly adhered to. For instance the occupational castes whoa re engaged in manual crafts of a specialised nature are so important to the community as a whole that they are socially acceptable at a higher level. Intercaste marriages are common too. High caste husbands who beget sons through marriage with low caste females bestow their superior caste females bestow their superior caste rating to their offsprings. But marriage between low caste males and high caste females are not encouraged. In central and eastern Nepal, apart from the Brahmans and the ruling Rajput families and various other Nepali-speaking caste communities of obvious plains origin, many of the Tibeto-Burman speaking populations have become Hinduised over the centuries and reflect today the caste structure of the plains. This is true of the Kshatriya, Thakur and Chhetri castes among the partially hybridised Tibeto-Burman speaking Newari and the Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu Gurkhas, who are often bilingual. However hybridisation has failed to eradicate the differences in biological and cultural matters between the Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples and the Indo-Aryan speaking people of the foothills and the plains.

Broad Ethnic Chart

The large number of ethnic groups may be broadly classified under three heads:

Himalayan people: Sherpa, Lhomi, Thudam and Topke Gola people, Olangchung people, Lopa of Mustang, Baragaunle, Dolpo people, Manangba, Larke and Siar people.

Middle hills and valley people: Brahman, Chhetri and the occupational castes of the hills, Newar, Rai and Limbu, Tamang, Magar, Sunwar and Jirel, Gurung, Thakali, Panchgaunle, Chepang.

Terai people: Brahman, Rajput and occupational castes of the plains, Tharu, Danuwar, Majhi and Darai, Rajbansi, Satar, Dhimal and Bodo, Dhangar, Musalman.

The Royal Family

The most significant and influential role in the formation of modern Nepal in the political, social and religious realms has been played by the Brahman and Chhetri communities. The members of the royal Shah family and their closest aides have traditionally come from the Thakuri and Chhetri castes. The Ranas belong to one such Chettri family.

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The Himalayan People — Sherpas

The Himalayan people of Nepal, numbering less than a hundred thousand in all occupy the valleys and mountain slopes on the Tibet–Nepal border. Their settlements are located at altitudes between 9,000 and 16,000 feet. Some 60,000 of them still live in their native habitat in the east, while a third of that number lives in the west; and a few thousands have migrated to the Kathmandu Valley. They speak various Tibetan dialects and their cultural and religious roots are Tibetan. The most famous among them are the Sherpas of Solu–Khumbu--the Mt. Everest region. Solu-Khumbu is also known as Shar-Khumbu, 'shar' meaning 'east' in Tibetan. The word 'Sherpa' is derived from the term 'sharva', meaning the people living in the east. They are also known as 'Shar Khombo', i.e., the inhabitants of Shar–Khumbu. Formerly, all the Himalayan people were inaccurately and slackly bracketed together as 'Bhote', after the Nepali term 'Bhot' for Tibet. The climate is cold, and rain–fall scarce, ranging from 10 inches in the west to 40 inches in some regions of the east.

Field agriculture, animal husbandry and mountaineering constitute the Sherpas' main occupations, with animal husbandry taking pride of place, owing to paucity of arable land and the rigours of the climate. Maize, wheat and potatoes are grown in Solu, while in Khumbu the Sherpas concentrate on raising yak and cattle. Khumbu lies on one of the important trade routes linking Nepal with Tibet through the Nangpa Pass. Namche Bazar, at 11,000 feet above sea level is the main trading centre. It has a little more than 100 substantial stone houses with wooden roofs. There is a good hotel too, which caters to the needs of tourists. The traditional Sherpa house is two-storeyed. The employment of Sherpas as guides to trekkers and mountaineers is increasing in volume. Modern education is being introduced too. There are several Sherpas who have been to Europe, America and other foreign countries. Some are employed in modern professional fields at home and abroad.

The traditional dress of the Sherpas is much the same as that worn by other eastern border people The men wear light blouse, shirt and light cotton or woollen pants topped almost always with a long dark cloak. They use high Tibetan shoes made of leather or cloth with leather soles, and are bound tightly at the calves. They often wear the Tibetan hat trimmed with fur. The hair is traditionally tied in a single long braid. The women wear their hair with a small cap. Over their silk or cotton blouses they wear a sleeveless full length dress with large pleats folded at the back and a plain waistband. They wear a colourful, striped apron in the front after the Tibetan fashion.

Sherpa society, unlike those of some other groups of the northern region, is divided into a number of exogamous clans, and so a person must marry outside his or her clan. Some important clan names, which are significant only where marriage is concerned and have no other divisive tendencies among themselves are: Chhusherwa, Chiawa, Gardza, Gole, Goparma, Hirgoma, Lakshindu, Lama, Mende, Mopa, Ngawa, Paldorje, Pankarma, Pinasa, Slaka, Shangup, Sherwa, Shire, Thaktu and others. These clans fit into two endogamous groups, Khadev, the higher one and Khamedu the lower group.

Fraternal polyandry is found among the Sherpas. Two brothers may marry one wife. Their attitude to sex is very tolerant in general except when the clan and group restriction is violated. Polygamy is also found in rare cases. The younger brothers have rights to their elder brothers' widows, and a younger sister has the right to marry her elder sister's husband after her death.

A Sherpa wedding is a ritualistic affair. First, the parents of the bridegroom send 'chhang' (a variety of alcoholic drink) to the brides' family. If the gift is accepted, the engagement is sealed. Then the groom goes to her house and spends much time there with her. During this time another function is held, when men and women numbering about 50 or 60 gather at a place to celebrate by drinking, eating, dancing and singing. Then the wedding proper takes place. The ceremony is accompanied by much festive spirit and convivialism too. The bride is given gifts after the singing and dancing have concluded. The parents of the bride give away the gifts, known as 'daejoo'. The first stage of the marriage is called 'seden', the second 'demjang' and the last 'jendi'.

Religious faith divides the Sherpa community into two sects:...the Ningam-pa and the Sakya-pa Owing to the greater acceptance among Tibetan Communities of the former, the Ningam-pa sect is dominant. The social life is influenced and guided by the Ningam-pa. In fact the other sect has only very nominal membership.

The 'Gomba' or the temple is the centre of all religious activity and also much of life itself. The annual worship 'Nengna' is performed to remove the ill effects of the sins committed during the preceding year and relieve one of the resultant curse. The Lama leads the reading of the holy book and others follow suit. The gombas of Solu-Khumbu and Tengboche are very famous. The Awatari Lama lives in Tengboche.

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Middle Hills and Valley People

The Brahmans

The Brahmans rank highest in the caste hierarchy, and have been among the most influential and affluent people of traditional Nepal. They are also the most widely distributed in the country. The Indo-Aryan language Nepali is their mother tongue. It is also the national language. More than half the Brahmans live in the western hills, where they constitute a large percentage of the population. In the rest of the hilly regions, they are more or less evenly distributed, while in the Terai, they are a small minority.

It is generally believed that the Brahmans came to the western hills of Nepal for the first time during the 12th century in order to escape the fury of the Muslim onslaughts, in the wake of the Muslim invasion of India. However, in recent times some Nepalese sections tend to challenge this theory. Their reasoning is based on nationalistic, cultural and religious grounds, rather than historical data. They claim that Brahmans must have always been present in Nepal, because, Nepal which is located in the Himalayan ranges was considered even in ancient days as a region lying to the north of Jambudwip, and therefore housed places sacred to the Hindus always. As a corollary, the propounders of this theory argue that Hinduism and Brahmans must necessarily have lived in Nepal even in the remote past, and would not countenance the claim that they had migrated to this country only as recently as the 12th century A.D.

The Brahman, known as 'baun, bahun, bavan, baman, dwij, vipra, guru' etc had been the guru of the Aryans. There are many folk tales about the origin of the Brahmans, with the Vedas as the basis for such beliefs. The Vedas say that at the time of Creation, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra were born from the mouth, thigh, hand and foot respectively of the Creator Brahma, and the Brahman had the prerogative of being the one who specialised in the use of his intellect and spiritual propensities. Metric hymnal known as 'Samhitas' was part of the anthology of Vedic scriptures of the earliest days. The great stress laid on the efficacy of rituals in all religious matters made trained priests an essential need. The emergence of the all-powerful priestly order flowed from this requirement. They chanted the hymns, performed the rituals, invoked the deities, and above all offered the fire sacrifice. This last item was the one which enabled the priestly class to secure for itself a position in the hierarchy which superceded even that of the ruler, and in some ways that of the gods themselves. These fire sacrifices were credited with magical powers which could even influence the gods against their own better judgment and self interest. The basic doctrine of Brahmanism held that the sacrifices, which could only be practised by duly accredited priests who possessed the power to create the world anew from time to time, and also preclude chaos from engulfing the Cosmos, which would have been the caseif the sacrifices were not offered in the prescribed fashion by properly instituted priests. The belief was very firmly planted in the minds of the Aryans of 900 B.C. This magical power of the fire sacrifice came to be known as 'Brahman', while the one who recited the verse was 'Prayer' or 'Brahman', and one related to it, 'Brahman', as identified with the literature or interpretation of Vedic prayers. These Brahmans who performed all the religious functions and 'yagyas', and worked as the household priests of the rulers were the forefathers of the Brahman community. This prectice gradually institutionallised the custom, and custom demanded that only the Brahmans should perform such religious tasks, thereby consolidating the foundations of the special community known as the Brahmans. The faith of the community about the very special qualifications which alone could make a person a Brahman, developed in course of time into a kind of unquestioning belief about the superiority born with the Brahman, rendering him a superior person in many ways.

Indian authorities on the subject have divided the Brahmans into ten groups, five each from the south and north of the Vindhyachal Hills. Out of the ten groups, the Upadhya and Maithili Brahmans are found in the hilly terrains and plains of Nepal. The Maharashtrian, Tailang, Dravid, Gurjar and Karnatak Brahmans from the south of Vindhyachal are not found in Nepal in any cog nizable numbers. Brahmans of Nepal belong to the Indian groups, Saraswat, Kanya-kubja, Gaud, Aut-kalya and Maithili and also Kanya-kubji or Upadhyaya. The Kanya-kubjis are also known as 'Purbia' Brahmans, because they had migrated to Nepal from the east of Punjab in India. There is another group known as the Kumain, who had apparently entered Nepal at a different time and also from another place in India......the districts of Kumaon in Uttar Pradesh. They are also known as 'paschima'. The Maithili Brahmans of eastern Terai are known by that name because they are associated with Tirhut or Mithila in India. The Jaishi is the offspring of irregular unions of male and female Brahmans. They are not allowed to officiate as priests. Nevertheless they are called Jaishi Brahman. They are mainly peasant farmers. It is a fact that the Purbia and the Kumain both claim superiority and greater degree of purity over each other, and at the same time the Upadhya belonging to the former, claim they are highest among all Brahmans, and therefore would not enter into marital ties with the Kumain. The Maithili Brahmans are mostly concentrated in the Terai.

The family names of Upadhya Brahmans are

Acharya, Dhakal, Dikshit, Dwivedi, Satyal etc. Among the Maithili Brahmans, the Shotriya, Panjib, Nagar, Jog, Yog and Jaibar groups have been given the family surname of Jha, Misra, Pathak, Chaudhari, Thakur etc. Among the Kumain Brahmans, there are family surnames like Misra, Pandey, Pant, Joshi, Uprety, Lohani, Pathak etc.

Brahmans of Aryan descent have a fairer complexion than others Though their primary occupation used to be priesthood, they are now engaged in all kinds of other jobs in fields like agriculture, trade, industry and various kinds of service. However even today, only Brahmans can function as priests.

The 'dhoti' is the formal dress of the Brahman, and he wears it while performing his functions as a priest, and while eating. The Brahmans of the hills usually wear the dhoti, labeda (long shirt) and uttariya (shawl), while the Terai Brahmans wear the dhoti, kurta and uttariya. The saree and the cholo (blouse) are worn by the females. The women wear bangles, nose-pin, ear-rings (bridal ornament) and other ornaments. Like dress, the food and the houses of Brahmans are influenced by the locality where they happen to live. Rice is the most popular food eaten by them. In the hills the average Brahman lives in a small, sturdy, two-storey stone or mud-brick house roofed with thatch. Village houses are usually scattered along hill slopes, on hill-tops, in flat valleys, or along ledges, as the case may be. In most parts of the country the Brahman houses are washed with red ochre or whitewashed. The inside walls are usually whitewashed and the floors are always cleaned with a fresh, wet mixture of cowdung and mud.

For a Brahman, the most important Vedic rite is the occasion when he puts on the sacred thread for the first time. Usually this ceremony takes place at the age of eight. However there is no bar to the function being postponed till his sixteenth year. Only after this 'dwij' ceremony does the boy enter the caste hierarchy, and therefore it is most important for him.

A Brahman girl is confined to a room for fifteen days after her first menstruation, and is not allowed to go out into the sun or look at a male. After fifteen days, she takes bath, and then her first duty is to worship the sun. The Maithilis do not observe this rite.

Pre-marital sex is formally banned in the community. Early marriages are encouraged. A girl's family is keen on her getting married at the proper age. A 'lami', middle man arranges the marriage between a suitable couple. An astrologer decrees whether the couple are suitable for one another. The marriage is performed in the 'kaulik' manner. Among the Maithili Brahmans, the marriage is arranged either through the groom's selection in 'sava', or by the 'ghar Katha' method. Like the 'bagdan' (the acceptance in public of the marriage proposal by the bride's guardian) among the Upadhyaya Brahmans, the Maithilis adopt the method of 'siddhant'. But the selection of the bridegroom from the 'sindur (vermilion) dan' and 'kanya dan' (giving awaythe of virgin) are the most important religious functions in the ceremony. Monogamy was practised and prescribed from ancient days, but there have been many instances of polygamy too. However this latter practice is fast dying out now.

The Brahmans burn (cremate) their dead, and they observe a ten-day period of mourning for the dead.They celebrate all Hindu festivals like Dusshera nd Diwali.

The Chhetris

The word 'Chhetri' is derived from 'Kshatriya'. Tradition entrusted them with the duty to fight wars protect the country and society from external aggression. Along with the Brahmans, the Chhetris have played the most dominant role in the creation modern Nepal. They also share with the Brahmans, the most important place in the country's tical, social and religious matters The royalty and their closest aides have been traditionally drawn from among the Chhetris and the Thakuris. Thakuris constitute the aristocracy in the community. The oligarchy of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers (1846-1951 A.D.) came from one particular Chhetri family. The community is in general in the forefront influence and wealth too. They speak the Indo-ryan la nguage Nepali, and live all over the country. he densest Chhetri population is found in the west central hill region, where, alonwg ith the Brahmans, they account for nearly eighty percent of the population. They are more or less evenly distributed in the rest of the hilly terrain, and are in a minority in the Terai.

It is belived that the Chhetris, like the Brahmans had first come to Nepal during the 12th century, when India was conquered by the Muslims. Some of them who are said to have come from Kanauj and Chittore, met Khas, the predominant race in the hilly regions of Kumaon, Garhwal and western districts of Nepal. They were a very powerful people then, and according to Prof. G. Tucci, they possessed a large and impressive empire till the 13th century. Although the Khas spoke a language closely allied to Sanskrit and were racially akin to Brahmans, the orthodox Hindus of the plains did not recognize them as people of their own stock, and classified them as Shudras. However, when they came into contact with the Brahmans during the 12th century, many of them were accorded the status of Kshatriya. Brian Hodgson wrote in the 19th century: "To the earliest and the most distinguished of their converts (Khas), they (the Brahmans) communicated, in defiance of the creed they taught, the lofty rank and the honours of the Kshatriya order." The progeny of a Brahman male and a local Khas hill woman became known as Khatri. They were also given the status of Chhetri and were called Khatri Chhetri. Hodgson continues: "To this progeny also, then, the Brahmans, in still greater defiance of their creed, communicated the rank of the second order of Hinduism; and from these two roots (Khas and Khatri), mainly sprang the now numerous, predominant, and extensively ramified, tribe of Khas......now the proud title of Kshatriya, or military order of the Kingdom of Nepal."

The Chhetris wear the sacred thread. They are those who were converted to Hinduism from the Khas. But there are many Khas in Jumla, Tibrikot, Humla, Mugu, Dailekh and other adjoining districts of the west who were apparently not given the sacred thread and the status of Chhetri. They are known locally as Matwali, and would prefer to call themselves Matwali Chhetris. They practise a shamanimist cult of Mashta with a strong influence of Lamaism from Tibet, and their evidence of being Hindus is very marginal.

The Chhetris' living conditions and houses are influenced by local conditions. Just as they, like the Brahmans have sought to exert their influence on others living in the same regions as themselves, the latter have exerted much influence on them also in turn. Their houses in the hills are usually two-storey stone or mud-brick affairs, painted over with red ochre or whitewashed, with thatched roof

Besides farming, the Chhetris and the Thakuris traditionally join the army and have earned a great reputation for themselves as being in the best league as soldiers.

The Chhetris like the Brahmans have been enjoined by tradition and rule to be monogamous, but polygamy was widely practised. Some of the middle class land owners used to have as many as six wives, while some of the powerful Ranas had several dozen wives and concubines. In such cases, they did not always care to adhere to caste endogamy. Polygamous Chhetris, like their Brahman counterpart had taken wives from almost every ethnic community, that is from Gurung, Magar, Sherpa, Newar and several other groups, but never from the occupational castes. Many powerful Rana Chhetri, during their halcyon days between 1846-1951, gave the status and title of Chhetri to the relatives of their favoured non-Chhetri wives. In rare instances, political influence has neabled a few to acquire Chhetri status and wear the sacred thread too.

Marriages are arranged through the agency of the 'Lami' or middle man. The astrologer has to decide whether the union is a suitable one. The wedding ceremony is conducted according to prescribed Vedic rites, and the Brahman priest of the bride's family officiates at the function. The wedding party is known as the 'Janti'. 'Kanyadan' follows. The old custom of having the feet of the bride and the groom washed in a copper bowl (silver or golden bowls are used for the most powerful Chhetris including royalty) by the family of the bride is not practised now-a-days. However the gift presented to the newly wedded couple is reminiscent of the practice,in that it is called 'gor Dhuwa'. The rituals and rites are followed by a protracted session of worship of the gods Ganesha, fire, earth, water, wind, sky etc by the couple. Vermilion is placed on the bride's hair. Only a married woman is to do this, and she is supposed to continue the practice every day so long as her husband is alive. Hindu society regard marriage as a means that ensures passage to heaven after death. Divorce is decried.

The Chhetris are believed to have more pointed noses than many others. The male wears the national Nepali dress--mayalpos, suruwal, coat and cap, while the female wears the saree and blouse.

They are all Hindus and worship the Hindu gods like Rama, Krishna, Shiva and Ganesh. They observe all the Hindu festivals too.

The Chhetri caste has many sub-sects like Bista, Mahat, Karki, Basnet, Rana, Rawal, Sijapati, Thapa, Khadka, Katheyat, Bania etc.

NEWAR--JYAPU

The Newars constitute the indigenous inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley. They number less than one half million in all, and account for some 4 percent of the total population of the country. Nearly half that number lives in the Valley itself, while the other half has moved to towns in the western region and also the Terai. Unlike other migrants, the Newars have not moved eastward in search of arable land, since they are primarily tradesmen and shop keepers and have chosen urban or semi-urban localities to migrate. About two thirds of the Newars follow the Hindu faith, while the other one third are Buddhists. However, close affinity in social and religious customs and practices exist between the two religious sections of the community. Today the community has big businessmen, importers, exporters, Craftsmen, farmers and so on. Among them are artisans and caste groups ranging from the lowest to the highest, from sweeper to priest, both Buddhist and Hindu. They are a unique and interesting people, and one of the oldest known groups in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley. They constitute a complex group of many types unlike distinct ethnic groups like the Gurungs, Magars and the Tamangs.

It is possible that the name Newar was derived from that of the country or vice versa. Theirs is more a cultural entity than an ethnic one now. Such changes had taken place after the conquest and occupation of the Valley by the Shah kings, and the region's domination by them and the Brahmans and the Chhetris who came with them. Today the term Newar embraces both the Mongoloid and Indo-Aryan types, and they speak both the Tibeto-Burman language Newari and the Indo-Aryan Nepali. Although the Dev Nagari script is used by them, originally there used to be a distinct Newari script too.

Sylvain Levi advanced the view that the Newars migrated to Nepal from regions lying to the north of the Himalayas. There are others who believe they originated in South India, with ties or distinct similarities to a Hindu community in the Malabar coast called the Nairs or Nayars. It is just possible the phonetic similarity of the two words Newar and Nayar might have emboldened speculators to plumb for such a surmise. Besides, there are some similarity in a couple of customs too. There are those who subscribe to the theory that the Newars entered Nepal during the 11th century with King Nanya Deva, a Karnatak ruler Here again phonetic influences of the words might have tended to influence conjectures and theories. Based upon an analysis laying stress on cultural and linguistic factors, the Newars should be credited with a predominantly Mongoloid ethnicity. They might have after all migrated to Nepal in very ancient times from Tibet and its contiguous regions. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf advanced the theory that "the bulk of the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal Valley since pre-historic times." Dilli Raman Regmi, a Nepalese historian believes the Newars may have an ancestry connected with both the Kiranti and Licchavis, one time rulers of the Nepal Valley.

Through the ages, various groups of immigrants had continued to exert considerable amount of cultural influence on the Newars. Many such migrant groups have been from time to time absorbed into the community. Of all such immigrants, the Malla Kshatriyas who came from India were the most distinctive. The Newar civilization finally took its amalgamated form in the 6th century B.C., when various groups like the Kirats, Kolliyas, Salmaliyas Sakyas, Licchavis and Sreshtis combined to form the earliest known group of the Nepal Valley. Ethnic ingredients as divergent as the well established Mongoloid connection on the one hand and the alleged Karnatak-Nair strain from South India make the community a most complex one in this context. The Malla kings ruled from around the 13th to the 18th century A.D. when the Shah kings ousted them. The Mallas brought with them the influence of a Hindu socio-religious base. To an otherwise non-caste region they gave the caste system.

Newari houses are built on much the same lines in Kathmandu Valley and the outlying districts. They are built close together on either side of cobbled streets and alleys. The standard house has several storeys, many large framed windows and doors, and often a verandah overlooking the street below. Roofs are mostly made of tile or slate, with only the poorest village Newars using thatched roofing for their houses. Newar aristocracy has shown a keen predilection for elaborately carved wooden doors and windows.

The highest castes in the Newar Hindu and Buddhist hierarchy include:

Deo Brahman—family priests known as Raj Upadhyay,

Bhatta Brahman—Temple priests who have the surname Bhatta,

Jha Brahman—Temple priests, known by the name Jha.

Gubhaju—family priests known as the Vajracharyas,
Bare—gold and silver smiths, otherwise called Sakyabikshus,
Shrestha—merchants,
Uray (Udas)—merchants and craftsmen, and
Jyapu—farmers and peasants.

It is said that creation of different castes and sub-castes within the Newar community took place during the reign of King Jayasthithi Malla in the 14th century.

THE JYAPUS are the farmers of the Newar community, who produce much of the grain and vegetables seen in the market. They use a hoe for field work and never use bullocks for tilling land For carrying loads they use a yoke balanced on the shoulders, with two baskets slung at either terminal. Jyapus also run domestic errands for other caste people, but culturally and religiously they are interdependent with the Gubhaju, Bare and Uray.

The Jyapu men differ from other Newars in matters relating to personal attire. They wear their own home-made garments made from home-spun cotton materials. The women wear black sarees with red borders, their blouses are made of finely woven cotton, and broad waist bands of plain cotton complete the ensemble.

The Jyapus are mostly Buddhists, with only very few exceptions who are Hindus. They are divided into many sub-sects like Mu, Danghu, Kumhar, Karbhuja, Boni etc. The Jyapu peasants are also known as Maharjan. The Hindu Jyapus live mainly in Bhaktapur. Other sub-divisions of the Jyapu community are Subal, Dangol, Guwa or Pahi etc. On the basis of occupation, the Maharjans are agriculturists, while the Dangols are surveyors of land. The traditional job of Subal is store-keeping, and the Kumales are potters. The Dangols live in Patan, while the Suwal are found in Machhe village, Mata-tirth, Kirtipur, Chovar, Thankot etc., where they are also known as 'Hale'. In Kathmandu they are concentrated in Thankot and are called either 'Sanpu' (cowherds) or 'Menpu' (buffaloherds). Pihi or Pahi used to be called Pahrat also, but they are not found today. There is very little caste or social superiority or inferiority attached to the different sects among Jyapus, and social, cultural and marital relations are freely maintained between all of them.

Trade plays little part in the Jyapus' pursuits. Even their festivals are linked to the agricultural theme. The rain god is propitiated in festive fashion, since a good rainy season only would ensure a good harvest. Immediately after cultivation of land is completed the 'sija-benke' festival is celebrated. It is meant to cleanse everybody, since during the planting of crops, all people irrespective of caste and other social divisions partake together in drinking and eating, thereby rendering many, slightly impure and polluted.

Many Jyapus are engaged in small scale cottage industry too. They specialise in spinning and weaving yarn, wood work and handicrafts. Most of the families have looms installed in their homes. It is mostly the job of thew omenfolk.

Women wear the nose-pin and also the 'o-sikha' around their necks. Jyapu women tattoo their ankles and menfolk have tattooed bodies. They believe that tattooing themselves helps them earn a better living, and also make things easier for them during the life after death.

Jyapu marriages are arranged through a 'lami' or middle man, who goes to the bride's house and offers a whole betelnut. The marriage processioncomprises members of the family of the bridegroom and his friends. The bride's party give bread known as 'dupahna' to the bridegroom's party, and the latter in turn offer gifts to the bride. Then the bride offers betelnuts to all those who are present. On the following day, the bride is brought to the groom's house in a palanquin known as the 'doo'. The doo is placed on the ground near the bride's house, when the bride's parents ask the others to take good care of the bride. This custom is known as 'Dusakhm' in their dialect. The bride is then carried to the main gate of the house. She then walks around the doo thrice before entering it.

When the bride arrives at the groom's house, the priest performs a rite at the front door, and then helps her enter the house. The bridegroom is called out at that point and they are made to link their palms. While the priest chants the mantras, the groom's parents ask the bride to hold up a nut called 'humkivu'.

The maternal uncle of the bride has to come to the house for this ceremony:carrying a sugar cane and some curd in a wooden box. This part of the ritual is known as the 'Paju Bicha'. Tradition demands the worship of Ganesh (Qain puja) also, after which food is served to all.

Three days after the birth of a child, the umbilical cord is cut by the nurse (Kasaini). Her fee used to be three Mohars, but nowadays eight kilograms of rice is offered instead. Only in the event of a male issue is the 'food taking' ceremony performed, and not if the child is a female. At the age of five the hair is cut, leaving a pigtail (tupi) on the head of the child. This function is performed by the maternal uncle of the child. The maternal aunt throws the hair thus cut into the Bagmati river,for which she is given a blouse.

The sacred thread is put on at the age of twelve, fourteen or fifteen. On this occasion the maternal uncle brings a load of foodstuffs called 'koo'. A sheep is offered in sacrifice to Ganesha. Then the maternal uncle divides the sheep's head into eight parts for distribution among the people assembled there.

If a child dies before the sacred thread ceremony, rites relating to the death are confined to the duration of four days, whereas it is extended to twelve days in the case of one whose death occurred only after the sacred thread had been worn. The tenth day ceremony, 'dubinkiu' is done after the death, when the women folk weep for the dead one. The barber shaves the heads of the males. Only then the house is considered purified after the death had occurred. Some Jyapus perform the 'kriya' too (the ceremony connected with offer ing food to the dead person's soul). This function takes place after one month, six months or two years.

The widow does not usually marry for two years. The community permits divorce and the marriage of widows.

Many varieties of musical instruments are used by the Jyapus in their religious and social festivals. It has much importance in their cultural life and traditions. Khee, pugambha, bansuri, dhimai, dha, baucha, ta, bhusya etc are the musical instruments used on these occasions. In the month of Magh the Khee is used in the morning. During Bhadra, the gunla and ynala are played in the morning and in the evening. Dhimai is played only during big festivals. During the wedding ceremony the Khee and Bansuri are played. The Jyapus exhibit unbounded enthusiasm and vigour during the Lakhe dance and Gaijatra. The songs sung by the Jyapu male are the normal expression of his experiences and feelings as a peasant.

Though Buddhists by faith, they worship their own family gods and some Hindu deities like Kumar, Ganesha and Indrani. The Jyapus also observe the Hindu festivals Ramanawami, Dushera, festival of lights etc. They celebrate the Magh Sankrini (the last day in the month of Magh) too. On this day the sons and nephews of the household are given specially prepared foods. The custom of 'Jharakh' (the serving of good food to the rice planters after the plantation season is over); has some overtones of religious faith. The Jyapus like many other Nepali communities believe in witch craft. Jyapus have been influenced to a great extent by Hindu religion and customs although in the strictly religious sense they are Buddhists.

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KAMI

Lohar, the community whose primary occupation is working in fields using iron and wood, is found in all parts of Nepal. Except for those among them who have migrated to India, especially the districts of Champaran and Darjeeling where they are known as Kamis, they are known by different names. The Kamis, primarily the blacksmiths of Nepal include Sinchokre, Langmote, Lama, Banth, Ghatri, Ghimire, Paret and Gadel. The exact origin of these occupational castes is obscure as is the case with their urban counterparts among the Newars. However they are generally known as the Lohar in a collective sense. Badahi and Mistri, who live in certain parts of the country also classify themselves as Lohar. The Kamis of the Kathmandu Valley living in Patan, Jawala Khel, Dhaksi, Pharphing, Busan, Bhaktapur, Thankot etc are also called Lohar. So it is obvious that the Lohar and Kami belong to the same occupational and communal group, and the difference in nomenclature occurs only due to the different localities they happen to live and work.

Kami in fact is the name evolved for a group who have evolved from different communities and castes, who have the same occupation, working on iron. The word 'loha' means metal, and Lohar might be evidently a derivative from that root. They do not positively belong to the same caste or community. This fact also might account for the differences in names as they apply to Lohar living in different parts of the country. The people known to Nepal as Kami or Lohar are also found in some parts of neighbouring India, where they are known as Kanaujia, Kikas, Magahia, Mathuria, Mahulia, Kamarkatha, Birbhumia, Gobindpuria, Sergharia etc. The Lohar of Champaran and Darjeeling are known as Kamls. The Kanaujia consider themselves as the highest order in the caste-community. They consider Biswakarma as their ancestor, and worship him as their occupational deity.

The Lohar do not allow a nursing mother to do any work in the house for eleven days after child-birth. Nor is she permitted to sit for food along with other members of the household during this period. On the eleventh day 'Nwaran', or the name-giving ceremony for the child takes place. The function is conducted by a sister's son, and all the members of the family and their friends are invited to be present on the occasion. After six months 'Pasni', the function when the child is given its first feed other than mother's milk is conducted. At this ceremony new clothes adorn the child, and it is given rice and milk. If it is a girl, the ceremony is conducted during the sixth month after its birth. The 'sacred-thread' ceremony takes place when the child is seven years old. The maternal uncle cuts the child's hair, and it is taken round the locality with a great show of pomp. This tour of the locality is known as 'Desh' (country). On this occasion a cock is killed as a sacrifice, and there is much merry-making, drinking and eating.

Child marriage is not usual among the Kamis. Traditionally the marriageable age is sixteen. The engagement is finalised when a bride is asked for and the request is granted. Then five persons from the bride's family go to the groom's house with gifts of wine and a cock.

After a few days, a Brahman names a suitable day for the wedding. The marriage ceremony is conducted only by a Brahman, whereas other functions like 'Nwaran' etc are performed under the supervision of non-Brahmans. However in such instances even, the date for the performance of the function has to be fixed by a Brahman. The Brahman priest accompanies the bridegroom and the wedding procession. Damain musicians go with the processionists. The sons of the bride's sisters and the groom jointly offer worship to the fire god and also perform other religious rites. The next day the bride is brought to the groom's house, with musicians in attendance. The groom's sisters welcome the bride at his house.

Traditional custom bans the girl who has her first menstruation from seeing any man including her brothers for fifteen days. But during later monthly cycles, she is required to live separately only for five days.

A Kami family mourns the death of a relative for thirteen days. As in the case of all Hindus, the dead body is cremated and the male offspring of the dead, lights the funeral pyre. The ashes are washed into the river immediately afterwards. The person who lights the funeral pyre wears white clothes and does not eat salt for thirteen days afterwards. On the thirteenth day he is considered clean once again, and his sister's son performs the rites on that occasion. The Shradh ceremony (offering food to the dead) is performed after six months and twelve months.

The Kamis depend almost entirely on their traditional vocation for their livelihood. Hardly anyone among them work on the land. The most accomplished Kamis work on iron alone, while many others among Lohars work on wood and iron alike.

The Kamis are not obseved to be too orthodox in matters relating to many Hindu customs. They usually worship their own family god, and once a year they observe the Dewali or Diwali festival, when again, food is offered to the family god. They are known to have much faith in witches and witch craft. They celebrate many Hindu festivals like Dushera and also worship the Hindu gods. They also offer worship to Bagh Bhairab, Champadevi etc. In India, the Kanaujia-Lohar and the Lohar of Bihar are more or less strict followers of Hindu customs and rites. The Lohar of the Nepal Terai also accept the Hindu way of life and Hindu gods. Besides, they celebrate Hindus' festivals and worship local gods and goddesses.

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GURUNG

Gurungs are hardy hill people living along the southern slopes of the Annapurnal Himalaya in west central Nepal. Their traditional territories extend from Gorkha District in the east through Lamjung and Kaski to Syangja District, all in Gandaki Zone. Gurungs are also found further to the north. Of late many have migrated southward into the Rapti Valley of the Inner Terai to take up a new life on fertile land recently cleared of malaria.

The Gurungs are ethnically related to their neighbours the Magars aud the Thakalis, and even to the Kiranti tribes Rai and Limbu of eastern Nepal. They with the Magar and Khas formed the bulk of the Shah armies of Gorkha, which enabled King Prithvi Narayan Shah to conquer Kathmandu Valley and unite the country into one nation. Today virtually every Gurung village has men in the British and Indian armies, and in the Royal Nepal Army and police forces as well.

The bulk of the Gurung population is concentrated in the two districts of Lamjung and Kaski. There are about 200,000 of them in all, and nearly 90 percent live in the western hills. This constitutes about 1.5 percent of Nepal's total population of over 13 million. Virtually all of them speak the Gurung language, a dialect of Tibeto-Burman origin. They are a Mongoloid physical stock who migrated to the southern slopes of the Himalaya in central Nepal many centuries ago. They live at the interstices between two great cultural and social traditions, Indian Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism, and between two distinct ecological zones, the low sub-tropical valleys and the alpine mountain highlands. Now, their life and culture are poised between long and steady tradition and the changes which accompany modernity.

Early Gurung religion was animistic and shamanimistic, akin to the pre Buddhist Bon religion of Tibet. The economy was herding, hunting and slash-and- burn agriculture. They have also an early tradition of trans -Himalayan trading. In recent centuries, they have been in contact with Hindu migrants from the south led by the Brahman and Kshatriya castes. The Nepalese Hindu castes of Brahman and Chhetri eventually came to dominate the hill people culturally, politically and economically. Nepali, an Indo-Aryan language became the lingua franca and it is today spoken by the Gurungs, when dealing with other people. Agriculture based on irrigated and upland rice as well as on maize, wheat eleusine, millet, and barley has become the economic mainstay of the hill people. In the northerly part of their region, some Gurungs still pursue seasonal highland grazing of sheep, goats, cattle and water buffalo. Gurungs still engage in long distance trade. Until recently, they bartered with Tibetan salt traders to their north. Now they mostly trade in the monetary economy with Nepalese and Indian merchants in the south. However the most important source of Gurung family income is from the pensions and salaries of those who become soldiers.

The traditional dress of the Gurung men includes a short blouse tied across the front and a short skirt of several yards of white cotton material wrapped around the waist and held in place by a broad belt. But many among them wear modern western clothes. Gurung women have not cast off their traditional dress. They most often wear a cotton or velveteen blouse tied at the front, and a saree skirt of printed material, usually of a dark reddish colour. Their ornaments include gold and coral necklaces, and gold ear and nose rings given to them traditionally at the time of their marriage. Both men and women wear the 'rup' around their neck. The females use seven and the [men nine 'rups'.

A Gurung community is divided into two main groups known as Char-jaat and Sora-jaat, or literally four clans and sixteen clans. The char-jaat is considered higher in status. The two do not intermarry usually. They are endogamous units divided into exogamous clans. Char–jaat clans live mostly on the high ridges close to the alpine pastures, while Lamjung's sora–jaat are found further south, and practise farming almost to the exclusion of shepherding.

Char–jaat clans are Ghale, Ghodane, Lama and Lamichane. Sora–jaat clans include Ghyabre, Kyabchhe, Kurumchhe, Jangre, Thorje, Dorjali, Rilami, Foju, Chormi, Pom, Thin, Migi, Khatra, Yoj, Paingi, Kholali, Sogun and Thorjami.

Ghales are the aristocrats among Gurungs. They and Ghyabres observe many Brahman–Chhetri ritual taboos in eating habits etc.

Marriage arrangements are unique among Gurungs. By tradition cross–cousin marriage is preferred, but they have much freedom to choose their own partners. All cross-cousins, that is both father's sisters' daughters and mother's brothers' duughters are possible marital partners for a man, but the preference usually is for the father's sisters' daughters. Marriages of parallel cousins are strictly forbidden, that is a boy cannot marry his father's brother's daughter, nor can he marry his mother's sister's daughter.

When a man makes his choice of a bride, he informs his parents about it. They send a male relative or friend with a rupee and a bottle of spirit to the bride's home. If the latter accepts the proposal, the guests are feted. Then the man is free to choose a time to bring the bride to his house. There she stays for a little while before going back to her own house. The visits between the man and his woman alternates between the two houses for quite a long period. When the first child is born, she is brought home to his house for good. When the girl is finally taken to her husband's house she in given a dowry by her parents. It consists of copper and brass cauldrons and water jars, sheep and cattle, and clothes and ornaments.

Ghyabres are the priests of all except the Lama Gurungs, who choose priests from their own class. One of the duties of the priests is to officiate at the christening rite of a new-born baby.. This is done on the eleventh day after the birth. Ghyabres also perform the funeral service and a post-funeral service called pa-ye.

There are two ways of disposing of the dead body, cremation and burial. By studying the position of the constellations at the moment of death, the priest decides the mode of funeral.

Some Gurungs have now taken Brahman priests, and some others, Magars for instance have adopted the Lamaistic form of Buddhism. Originally the Gurungs have been Buddhists. Since then a great deal of Hindu influence has tended to make them follow a Brahman-guided form of worship and social habits. At the same time, in their family worship tradition, Buddhist Lamas lend the needed leadership and guidance. Giving an account of both the Gurungs and Magars, Brian Hodgson, in one of his essays says: "From lending themselves less early and heartily to Brahminical influences than the Khas (Chhetri) they have retained in vivid freshness, their original languages, physiognomy and, in a less degree, habits."

Besides the clan heads there are administrative headmen for every village. The villagers sometimes form an ad-hoc council for settling small local problems.

Nearly all Gurungs know his 'bardha' name, that is, the name of the one particular year out of twelve in their Tibetan lore, which are associated with a particular animal. For example 'Fo-lo' means the year of deer......lo denotes year in Tibetan. Ta-lo is horse year, Khi-lo is dog year, and so on.

Two types of dances are popular with the Gurung, the Sorathi and Ghado. Rodi is another interesting Gurung institution. This is a club for boys or girls of more or less the same age—usually ten or eleven—conducted under the supervision of a male or female adult. The house of the preceptor becomes a dormitory and it is called the 'rodi'. The senior-most member of the rodi becomes the leader or 'chiva'. The members are called 'rogsyo me'. The male and female members live apart in separate rodis under the male or female guardian respectively. The guardians are called 'neva ava' (male) and 'neva ama' (female) respectively. The membership consists of twelve or fifteen people. They live in the rodis by and large till they are seventeen or eighteen, when they get married. Not all members of a village need necessarily be members of the rodis. There are several rodis in each village. All the members of a rodi usually work together in the fields, or go together to fetch wood from the forest. There is much social mixing among members of a rodi, and at times between members of more than one rodi.

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MAGAR

The Magars of middle and western Nepal have played an important role in the formative history of Nepal. During the 17th and 18th centuries their kingdom was one of the strongest in west Nepal in and around Palpa District. They have been for a long time in contact with the Indo-Aryan speaking Khas (Chhetris) and Brahmans, and instances are not rare when the Magars and the Khas have fought battles under one banner. The founder of modern Nepal, the 18th century Shah king Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha had great confidence in them as soldiers. The Magars and the Khas a'ong with Gurungs formed the bulk of his armies which conquered all Nepal into a single nation. The Magars are believed to have migrated to Nepal from Tibet and central Asia a very long time ago. But today they feel that they have been always in their present habitat in Nepal. They are distinctly Mongoloid in physical features and is possible that the Magars were Buddhists at one time, but today most of them have come under the influence of Hinduism and Brahman-Chhetri customs. There are about three hundred-thousand of them, more than half of whom live in the western hills, while a large number live in the eastern hills too. There are some Magars in Terai and Kathmandu as well.

There has been a general trend of eastward migration, in search of more fertile arable land and opportunities in fields of craftsmen's occupation. Many Magars are skilled masons, carpenters, stone cutters, builders and quarry workmen. However the primary source of their income is agriculture, and some keep sheep and goats too. A few of the most prosperous among them are engaged in long-range trading, after settling down in the Terai and nearby Indian towns. A very large number of Magars are soldiers in the British, Indian and Royal Nepal armies. They serve in the Nepalese police force too.

Generally Magars prefer a warmer climate than the Gurungs, their neighbours to the immediate northern regions in west-central Nepalese hills. But quite a few occupy higher altitudes and rear goats and sheep. Such Magars are much influenced by Tibetan society of such localities, in matters relating to dress, customs, religion and language.

Their houses are built in accordance with the accepted norms obtaining in the places they happen to have settled. The most traditional house is two-storey structure with thatch or slate roofing. Most of the other Magar houses in the west are round or oval in shape and washed with ochre or reddish-mud. The Magar houses in the esatern hills are never round, and are whitewashed. They have stone walls and wooden shingle roofs, and are two-storeyed with a verandah along the front side. Some of the houses in the northern-most regions have flat roofs and are three-storeyed, and the ground floor is reserved for domestic animals, as is the case with Sherpa and other mountain people in the northern regions.

The Magars consist of a number of clans known as 'thars', the members of which are believed to have a common origin. These patrilineal 'thars' are further subdivided into strictly exogamous lineage groups. As a rule all these clans have equal status. The clans are: Ale, Afri, Benglasi, Budathoki, Esmali, Gurung. Chan, Ghatri, Maski, Murung Chan, Pun, Rana, Dudh, Rewali, Hiski, Rakhal, Sidari, Thumsing, Thapa.

The Magars as an ethnic group are endogamous, like most other Nepalese caste and ethnic groups. Some Magar women marry outside their group, but most men stick to their own groups in marital matters. A man may marry his mother's brother's daughter. Most Magars are prevented from marrying their father's sister's daughters, although some in the northern regions do so. Most Magars live in close contact with Brahmans and Chhetris and therefore follow their customs in marriage matters. Marriages are usually arranged by the parents of the couple. But in some cases young people make their own choice before having their parents come in and make arrangements for the wedding. A few make their choice without consulting their parents and live together as man and wife in a relative's or friend's house for quite a long time, before their parents endorse the union and then go through with the formalities. Some of the Magars living in the northern–most regions practise the tradition of marriage through abduction or capture, but the custom is not prevalent among Magars living to the south of the highest Himalayan settlements. In the case of arranged marriage, the parents of the boy send a party of their relatives to the house of the bride to be, with a bottle of rice wine. If the girl's party accepts the offer, the parents of the boy may go ahead with the preparations for the wedding. 'Gordha' or dowry may be given to the bride by her parents and relatives. The dowry usually consists of copper and brass vessels, jars, silver and gold ornaments, clothes and mattresses, cattle, goats, sheep etc.

Over a century ago Brian Hodgson wrote about the Magars as having been in the main Hindus only because "it is the fashion". The majority are Hindus. They have Brahman priests who lead them and guide them on the same lines as the Brahmans and the Chhetris in all religious customs. The Magars do not wear the sacred thread, and in most other matters they behave and live like the Chhetris. There are Buddhist Magars in the districts of Myagdi and

Dolpa. It is possible tha tbehaviour and custom in both cases are influenced by the immediate neighbourhood and association.

Most Magars worship the gods and goddesses as Brahmans and Chhetris .....Vishnu, Mahadev, Ramachandra, Krishna, Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Bhagvati, etc. They celebrate the same festivals as the Hindus...Dashain, Tihar, Sankranti and others, in addition to which they observe a number of tribal occasions and festivals for worshipping clan deities and other gods and goddesses.

Hindu Magars observe birth pollution for ten days, with the name-giving ceremony conducted on the seventh day. The ceremony for shaving the boy's head is performed at the age of five or six. They almost always cremate their dead and mourn for thirteen days after the death of the nearest relatives. A Brahman priest conducts the funeral and the death anniversaries. Those Magars who live in localities far removed from Brahman areas employ their sister's son or daughter's husband to preside over religious functions. Some among them bury their dead instead of cremating them. Buddhist Magars employ Lamas to perform life-cycle rituals instead of Brahmans.

In Magar society the father is the more important person, and the male enjoys more freedom than a woman. A male member of a family may go on a visit alone, whereas a female may not. Many stories of epic Hindu nature are popluar among them. They have faith in witches and witch craft. On the fifteenth day after a death takes place, 'pinda-dan' is done...... offering meat, bread, wine, rice etc to the soul of the dead one. The dances of the Magars show much Tibetan influence. The most popular form of traditional Magar dress consists of the 'bhoto' (shirt) and 'langoti' (underpants). The women wear the saree in a special manner in that the front portion is shorter than the back portion. The women use silver coins for ornaments, and also wear big ear-rings and nose-rings.

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TAMANG

The Tamangs live in high hills east, north, south and west of Kathmandu Valley. They are seen in large numbers in the streets of Kathmandu carrying large basket-loads of goods with the aid of headstraps, and with the Kukhri in their waistband. Tamangs form one of the major Tibeto-Burman speaking communities of Mongoloid origin in Nepal. They are believed to have been Tibetan immigrants, who arrived in Nepal a very long time ago. There are more than half million of them in Nepal. Nearly half of them live in the hills lying to the east of Kathmandu Valley. The western hills account for over a hundred thousand, while 25,000 live in the Kathmandu Valley and about the same number in eastern Terai, with a small number in central and western Terai also. Tamangs prefer the higher, dryer elevations for living and farming at altitudes of between 5,000 and 7,000 feet above mean sea level.

Tamang villages are compact and self-sufficient in food, which they themselves grow. Most are still very poor, and toil as tenants to land owners, and many more work as porters and menial servants. Their staple crop at higher altitudes are maize, millet, wheat, barley and potatoes Those who have settled in the lower, warmer and wetter regions grow paddy also. All of them keep a few cows, buffalos and chickens.

They are in general very skilled in many crafts such as the making of woollen jackets with sheep's wool. They also weave bamboo baskets, receptacles for storing grain and leaf umbrellas. There are Tamangs who are good carpenters, masons, builders and wooden plough makers. Some Tamang Lamas, their Buddhist priests are excellent painters of the Tibetan type 'Tankas' and religious scrolls, while others are expert in carving wooden designs. Some Tamangs are in the armed forces also.

Still many of the Tamangs are concentrated in the district of Makwanpur. Owing to the wide dispersal, they have not preserved Tibetan art, culture or religion in tact. Those living outside the traditional areas retain very little of their original culture and habits, and usually adopt the cultural patterns of their immediate neighbours The men and boys usually wear loin cloth and long dark tunics. In winter they wear short– sleeved sheep's wool jackets. Normally they wear the Nepali cap too. In their dialect the ensemble is termed the 'bhoto' and the 'bakkhu'. The women wear a simple saree and blouse adorned with a few ornaments .. 'gyun', blouse and 'barko'. They wear ornaments in their nose, ear, neck and wrist.

In Tamang territory a strict 'kipat' land system was maintained through the various clan divisions over many generations, and it has only recently been abolished. The headman of a Tamang village is called 'talugdar'. The entire community of Tamangs is vertically divided into several subgroups, known as 'thars'. Each 'thar' has its own name, and there are more than 25 of them. All of these clans are exogamous, but each clan's members are permitted to intermarry with any other clan's members, except in a couple of cases, which consider themselves to be 'brother clans'. In some places the terms 'bara jaat' and 'athara jaat' are used to describe people of higher and power status respectively. The terms literally mean 'twelve clans' and 'eighteen clans'. However these terms are not evidently in vogue among most Tamangs today. Intermarriages between these two divisions are not believed to take place. This is the only horizontal division in the otherwise completely vertically divided exogamous and patrilineal clans of the Tamangs.

A Tamang can marry any girl from any clan except his own and his brother clan. Marri-ages between cross-cousins are preferred in many cases. Parallel cousin marriages are not favoured. Marriages are of three standard types: arrangement, capture and mutual arrangement. Most Tamangs get married through mutual agreement. Widow marriage is permitted. Most marriages are performed under the supervision of a Buddhist Lama.

The Tamangs profess the Buddhist faith. There are 'ghyangs', Buddhist temples in every large Tamang village. The gods and religious paintings inside are all in Sherpa style, and the religious texts are in Tibetan script. The Tamang Lamas are trained in the Buddhist Lamaistic tradition in rituals, and they conduct different kinds of ceremonies and funerals The Tamangs also observe Hindu festivals like Dashain and Diwali. The leader of most social activities is the 'mulmi'.

According to folk lore of the Tamangs, the community is progeny of 'Maheswar'. A child born through marriage of Tamang male and a woman of another community is called 'naya nabra', and it is not considered a pure Tamang. Only after several generations of marriage with Tamangs alone will render the progeny of the 'naya nabra' admissible among the Tamangs as one of them in all respects.

They are influenced in some ways by Hinduism also. However Buddhist tenets are most influential in most ways. They believe in the transmigration of the soul. They subscribe to the faith in witches and witch craft too.

The naming ceremony of the child is done on the ninth day after birth. On that day, the child is given a bath. On the twelfth day, the mother is considered to have become 'pure' once again, and only then other people partake of food which she has touched. Between the third and ninth year, the child's head is regularly shaved.

The Tamang household is patrarchal. They observe the 'food-taking' function of the 'guthi', and offer beer (jand) specially prepared for the occasion, to their clan god.

The community cremates its dead. For the dead one's soul, the Tamangs perform the 'Aghaun' rite. For this, a clay model of the dead person is prepared and it is worshipped with strict religious ritualistic observances. This function is done regularly every year for many years. The influence of evil spirits is eliminated in all affairs pertaining to the community through the observance of 'jhankri'.

The name-giving ceremony of a child is an important function. A girl is named on the 7th day and a boy on the 9th or 11th day.

The number of modern, educated Tamangs living in Kathmandu need not necessarily be taken into serious consideration where the community's affairs are concerned. Most of them have lived in India for two or more generations, and have become detribalised and cut off from Tamang society in all ways.

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KIRANTI—RAI & LIMBU

The Kiranti people of east Nepal, known as Rai and Limbu, together form one of the largest single ethnic groups in Nepal, second only to the Tamangs. There are a number of smaller tribal groups among the Kiranti, the two most important ones being Rai and Limbu. The Rai in some districts are called 'Jimidar' 'or Jimi', in other areas 'Khambu,' and in some places they are referred to by a particular 'thar' clan denomination. In course of time Rai came to include the Yaksha people, a third subdivision of Kiranti. The Limbu is also referred to as 'subba'which like Rai means headman or chief.

The Kiranti people speak a number of Tibeto–Burman dialects collectively known as the Kiranti language. Their Mongoloid appearance, pale yellowish pigmentation, flat faces and almond–shaped eyes, make them quite distinct in appearance from Brahmans and Chhetris, and they can easily be distinguished from Tamangs and Sherpas too.

Their exact origin is a little bit obscure. Some sources indicate many of them, if not all, had migrated to Nepal from Tibet a very long time ago, while there are people who believe they had always lived in the Nepal hills. In any event, it is an established fact that they have been closely associated with Nepal's history for thousands of years. Their feats of bravery have been recorded in Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and in the ancient historical records of Nepal itself. Kiranti kings ruled over Kathmandu Valley till the 2nd century A.D., and some historians believe that there might be a strain of the Kiranti in the present day Newar community. The last Kiranti king was the ruler of Bijaypur two miles east of Dharan in the Kosi Zone. The ruins of his fort is still there on a hilltop. He was defeated towards the end of the 18th century and his territory annexed to the kingdom of Nepal by the rulers of the Shah Dynasty.

Rai

The Rai are more numerous than the Limbu. The former number some one quarter million or a little more, compared to the Limbu population of about 150,000. The great majority of the Rai live in the traditional hill regions in Kiranti Pradesh and its neighbourhood, while most of the remainder numbering about 20,000 live in the eastern Terai near the Indian border, and a few in Kathmandu Valley and areas west of it. It is however possible that many more might have migrated to the Terai in very recent years.

In their traditional habitat, the Rai territory is known as Manjh-Kirant, 'Middle Kirant', while the Limbu settlements are called Pallo-Kirant, 'Far Kirant'. Most Rai territories lie at altitudes of three to six thousand feet above sea level. Their small one-storey houses are built of stone and are usually thatched or in some cases roofed with slate. Typical Rai households contain a few brass pots, iron pans, earthen jars and baskets for storing grain. Those who do not possess brass pots fetch water from the river or spring in large bamboo pipes. It is usually done by womenfolk.

The Rais cultivate both wet and dry land. The dry terraces grow maize, millet, wheat and some mustard, while paddy is grown in wet fields. They grow enough grain for their food and the surplus is used to make spirits which they drink in large quantities. They grow vegetables and fruits too. Men and women smoke a kind of cigarettes made out of locally grown tobacco wrapped in the fine inner sheath of maize. They also cultivate cotton which is used for weaving coarse cloth they wear. Some women also make rugs with sheep's wool. Women wear ornaments. All men carry the khukri.

Their income is also dependent on army pay, since many Rais are in the British, Indian and Royal Nepal army. A few have joined the civil service in the country, besides the Nepali police. Some farmers also raise cattle, goats, pigs and chickens. The Rais like similar ethnic groups make excellent soldiers and are known for their bravery. The Rais are subdivided into no less than 20 'thar' clans. Each of the groups is usually found in localities where they speak their own distinct, dialect which is not intelligible to other clans. In such cases Nepali serve as the medium of communiaction for all. The Rai clans are most often endogamous.

Sex mores are liberal and of a permissive nature, except in cases where relationship within a span of seven generations is involved. They are mostly monogamous Marriages are of three varieties: by arrangement, capture, or by elopement or mutual consent between the couple. In all such cases, a 'nokchhoe', the religious leader may be hired to invoke deities and bless the couple, and the young couple haveto pay homage to the girl's parents and their representatives. Small token cash gifts are given to many relatives by the groom. A feast of rice, meat and home-made beer has to be provided by the groom's family in all types of marriages.

The Rais practise a religion which is strictly neither Hindu or Buddhist, although they have been much influenced by Lamaistic Buddhism and Hinduism. They usually worship many local deities. Every year a number of religious ceremonies are performed. The religious leader who presides over these functions is called the 'ngopa'.

Rais usually bury their dead. A religious leader is required to preside over the funeral function.

Mourning is undertaken by the nearest kinsmen of the dead one, who abstain from eating salt, meat, liquor and oil for six days.

Limbu

The Limbu territory in their traditional region is known as 'pallo-Kirant' or 'Limbuwan', the land of the Limbus. Like the Rais some Limbus have migrated to the Terai in recent times, but such migrants constitute only a few thousands. Limbuwan includes the area east of the Arun River extending to Nepal's eastern border with India's West Bengal. Locally we find the designation Limbuwan prefixed by 'das', as 'Das-Limbuwan', meaning the Ten Limbu Lands, alluding to the popular belief that at one time in the early days there were ten Limbu rajas. The Limbus are also known as Subba, and they are often addressed thus.

The Limbu language is a dialect apart from Rai, and includes the written form. The Limbus have been living in eastern Nepal for thousands of years. "The mountain is, in fact, his domain," writes Sylvain Levi. 'It is there he continues to live and to dominate during the epic period." Limbu settlements are found at altitudes of 2,500 and 4,000 feet. Houses are single-storey affairs, built with stone and roofed with thatch. There are villages with 30 to over 100 houses on older sites Typical household articles are brass, copper and aluminium pots and pans, water jars, earthenware utensils, baskets and wooden containers for storing grain.

Limbus raise enough rice, wheat, and millet for their own consumption. The paddies are elaborately terraced and irrigated, whereas other crops are grown on dry land with no irrigation facility. They make and consume 'rakshi' a local wine made from surplus grain. 'Tongba',a kind of 'beer' is another favourite drink. The farmers also keep buffalos and cows for milk and manure, and goats, sheep and chicken for meat Both men and women smoke cigarettes Some farmers grow their own tobacco.

Many Limbus are soldiers in the British, Indian and Nepal army, while some are civil servants.

Another name for the Limbu is 'Yakthumba', the breeder of the yak. They are physiognomically and culturally of Mongoloid origin. Other names applicable to the Limbu, other than 'subba' are: 'tsong', denoting the belief that they might have migrated to Nepal long ago from 'tson' in Tibet, and 'Chang', as they are referred to by the Lepchas. Tradition and lore say that out of the thirteen clans (there are thirteen, although the division is referred to as 'Das-Limbu') five came from Lhasa and another five from Banaras. Hence the two 'gotras', called 'Lhasa-gotra' and 'Banaras-gotra'. There is little clannish discrimination among the Limbus, in spite of the fact they are subdivided into many small clans named: Suhanga, Madan, Palugawa, Tumbahamphe etc.

Marriages are strictly monogamous and patrilocal. Marriage rules are akin to those of the Rais, and consist of three main varieties: arrangement, capture and elopement. The ideal age for marriage is eighteen to twenty. The young people have much freedom to mix between the two sexes. They dance the 'Yalangma', which is accompanied by singing. The boy first informs his parents about his choice of a bride. They then accord their sanction for the marriage, and send the gift of a slaughtered pig to the bride's family. The marriage ceremony is conducted by the priest known as the 'fedeng', for which he is given a turban and some money. This is followed by dancing, singing and feasting. A cock is also sacrificed on the occasion.

The Limbus observe a custom called 'pachpanna riti' (fiftyfive customs) after the wedding ceremony. First the parents of the bride sign the document of marriage. They then give the groom a certificate setting out the details of the expenditure incurred by the groom's family to conduct the wedding. This certificate and document may be used by the husband later on, in case his wife leaves him in preference for another man, and the latter has to pay the husband that sum in compensation.

The Limbus generally follow Buddhist tradition and custom and religious formalities of the

Buddhists when living in Buddhist localities, and those of the Hindus when they are living among predominantly Hindu groups. They worship the Hindu gods Mahadev and Parvati. They have much faith in local gods and supernatural beings...spirits. They offer prayers to get relief from diseases. The Limbus used to bury their dead in olden days, but nowadays, many of them cremate the dead body after the Hindu custom. The dead are mourned for three days, and after that period there is feasting and drinking, in which the priest and friends and relatives participate.

The Limbus speak a language known as 'Limbu kura', and it is one of Tibeto-Burman origin. Its script is called 'shiri jang'. This script is believed to have had only twenty letters, but it grew later to contain 35.

The Limbus wear much the same clothes as other communities of Nepal...a coat, shirt, cap, pantaloon, underwear, mayal-pos etc. Their women wear a saree and blouse and use ornaments too.

Some other marriage regulations permit a Limbu to marry his elder brother's widow. He can also marry his dead wife's sister. But in such cases, the husband cannot claim compensation, in the event of his wife eloping with another man. Divorce is permissible. If a couple find it hard to live together, they have the choice of separation.

Even after marriage, the 'gotra kaulik' (family surname) of the woman does not change, and she continues to bear her father's family name. After several years of marriage, the man may ask his father-in-law to give away his daughter to him. If this request is granted, then alone will she change her original surname.

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SARKI

The Sarki live in all parts of Nepal. Their occupation is raw hide and leather craft. In different places they are known as 'chamar, mochhi and sarki'.

Like other occupational castes, the Sarki is divided into several sects and subsects. Marriage between members of the same sect or sub-sect is prohibited. Some of the sub-sects living in Naikap, Katunje, Baibu, Baswari, Pharping, Chobhar etc are known as Mangrati, Rokai, Belkoti, Binsuke, Duturokya, Bhokte, Rokya Dolal etc. All speak the Nepali language.

Their marriages are arranged by the family. After a marriage proposal has been formally accepted, the relatives or friends of the boy pay a visit to the girl's parents with gifts of orange, vegetables and some other edible substances. This is known as 'kalio haln', and denotes the final approval of the marriage proposal. This is a form of 'bag-dan' or betrothal. Three days before the date fixed for the wedding, swayambar or swayambhar (ceremonial selection of the groom by the bride) takes place. A gift of up to 120 kilos of rice, 14 or 15 cocks, ten kilos of wine, curd and vegetables is given to the bride's family by their counterparts in the groom's party. Then the groom greets his mother-in-law-to-be and gives her a rupee. The groom spends three days in the girl's house. When she finally leaves her home, her parents give her blankets, kitchen utensils etc. There is great rejoicing in the bridegroom's house on his return home.

The 'mangraties' do not partake of food touched by a nursing mother for ten days after child birth. After three days, the name-giving ceremony is held. The 'bail-koties' bring the child outside the house after eleven days of its birth. Among the Doles, the function is performed on the seventh day.

The 'food-giving' ceremony for the child is performed during the sixth month. Its ears are pierced when it is five years old. This is done only on the Maha Siva Ratri day. When the child is seven, its head is given a clean shave.

A girl is prevented from doing any work for 22 days after her first menstruation and during that period none eats any food touched by her. The marriageable age of a male is usually twentyfive, and that of a female, sixteen to eighteen.

The Sarkis worship the Hindu gods and goddesses, and celebrate Hindu festivals. They believe in many ghosts or spirits too. They believe that all diseases are caused by evil spirits, and to propitiate them, they sacrifice black cocks.

The Sarkis cremate their dead. The man who lights the funeral pyre has to have his head shaved first and he should wear white clothes. For eleven days afterwards he lives apart from all others, on the twelfth day he takes a bath, and on the thirteenth day he becomes 'clean or pure' once again. To complete this function, a Brahman is usually invited. He purifies the man with rice, barley etc, and he is then carried around for some ten yards by the one who had lighted the pyre. Then the Brahman pronounces the wish that such misfortune should never again befall him, and departs.

The Sarkis are mostly engaged even today in leatherwork.

RAUTE

The last of the hunting nomads of Nepal, and indeed of Asia as well to a great extent, the Raute today number only some 125 to 150 in all. They live in the middle hill region of western Nepal. The Kusunda, the other group in this category have adopted the agriculturists' calling since the early 1970's. The Raute still continue to speak their own Tibeto-Burman language. Only a very few among them speak intelligible Nepali. Their way of life, as a hunting and gathering tribe is unique in the Himalayan region; and their income is necessarily of the marginal nature.

They never live in villages in the vicinity of other people, and invariably return to their camp at night, whenever they go to the nearby villages. They keep to lower altitudes in winter, and move up to higher altitudes in warm weather. However, seldom do they live, hunt and trade at altitudes above 5,000 feet, and below 2,000 feet.

They hunt rhesus and langur monkeys for

food. The prey is surrounded on three sides, and then driven into nets set for trapping them. They never hunt monkeys when other people are around, for fear of their hunting deity ruining their pursuit. Yet another reason for this may be sought in the fact that most villagers are not given to killing monkeys. The Raute gather forest produce for food, and also make wooden bowls and chests, which they barter with villagers for foodgrain. Climatic conditions and trading opportunities determine their abode and field of operation. Western Nepal has an abundance of monkeys.

John Reinhard, Ph. D., a research student of the Anthropology Department, University of Wisconsin visited the Raute community during the first quarter of the last decade, and submitted his Report to the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies. Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista visited the Raute camp in Surkhet Valley in early 1972, a little while after the latter had met up with Reinhard. Their findings and observations are of much interest.

The Raute fell suitable trees for making wooden bowls and chests most often, which they then sell to the villagers, primarily for grain in exchange, and occasionally for cloth and metal utensils and implements. They also make larger wooden goods like cots and the like at times, for sale to buyers in the villages. They usually make two types of wooden bowls, which are never sold. They are retained for their own use instead.

The Raute make the bowls using long-handled and short-handled axes used in felling trees and chopping wood, adzes with slightly curved blade, and chisels. A medium sized bowl is made in a few hours, while a large chest takes a few days to make.

A newly made bowl is stored away from the sun and wind for a few days. Some keep it immersed in water, while others give them a coating of red clay. Such chores are the duty of the women, while only the men may make the object themselves.

A specially made wooden box is used for keeping objects used in worshipping their deities. The man who uses them for that purpose takes good care of such objects kept in the box.

The Raute do not return to an area where they have been once for trading purposes, for quite some time afterwards.

They do not remain in any one place for more than a few weeks at a time.

In winter they often build their camp in paddy fields in low lying regions. Women usually construct these huts, using branches of trees and saplings, and reinforce them with mats and grass. Sometimes tents are rigged within. There is a pit for fire within, and they sleep on straw, leaves or pine needles. Old blankets, firewood, cooking utensils, wooden water containers, bowls and metal pots are kept inside the huts. Iron cooking stands are found in some huts, besides axes, adzes and winnowing trays. Reinhard counted some 35 huts in one Raute camp. The number would diminish whenever the community splits up into two parties for a while, owing to internicine divisions of a serious nature, arising out of reasons including adultery for instance, as it had happened once at least in recent times. The huts measure 6 feet in diameter and are 4 feet in height.

The Headman is a very responsible person, and runs the affairs of the tribe. Mana Bahadur Raute, one such Headman had once called on the King, in the early 1970's.

The Raute never drink water from streams or rivers. Instead they dig a deep pit by the riverside, or locate a fresh-water spring for this purpose.

Rice is hulled by the Raute in a wooden mortar installed in an open space. A long wooden pestle is used for this work.

Raute women use hoes or sharpened sticks to gather yarn like Discorea Sativa.

Dor Bahadur Bista described their attire in these words: "Men wore a loin cloth, a narrow strip of material tucked at both ends in a string tied around their waist, thus covering only a minimum of their private parts, and they also had a large piece of cotton material over their shoulder not only covering their back and part of their front, but also hung over their legs down to the knees. Invariably they wore a head cover, either a traditional Nepali cap or a piece of cloth wrapped like a turban.

"Their women wore skirts of coloured cotton material, blouses prepared by themselves and a lot of trinkets around their necks and ears. They also wore iron, copper or glass bangles."

The Raute are, by nature inclined to be least communicative. It has been with much difficulty that the few anthropologists who have met up with them been able to elicit information about them from themselves. Probably for this reason, rumours and conjectures of a none too flattering nature are circulated by villagers, in whose neighbourhood the nomads set up their camp from time to time. Many villagers describe them as "dirty and filthy people", who are also "curt" and without any "sense of humour." Some such villagers told Bista that they "are very anti–social and never discuss anything with anyone." Others told the visitor: "They are very straight forward and simple in dealing with the villagers. When they bring the wooden bowls to exchange with food-grains they never bargain and never let anyone take advantage of them. They insist on the proper rate and force people to accept it. If they are ordered to make a wooden chest or some such thing, they always bring their object on the specified date and grow very angry if the client hesitates or tries to bargain." These comments are apparently, trustworthy. But the earlier remarks of a disparaging nature have failed to prove themselves in the opinion of those who have made attempts to ascertain facts relating to the Raute. Rural folk's belief about the Raute being capable of, and indeed given to 'bewitching' females of the villagers and taking them away to be reared as their own in their midst, is as yet unverified, and in all probability a mere figment of malicious imagination of villagers ill disposed towards them. However, it is believed that the Raute, like most other isolated tribal communities believe in witches and witch craft, besides being highly susceptible to superstition, especially in matters relating to their own deities and their moods, which could, according to themselves, make or mar their fortunes in their pursuits and occupation.

The future of the Raute is still very much in the balance. It is just possible that they might ultimately opt for agriculture and manual labour, when the demand for the wooden objects they sell in the villages lose their appeal, in the wake of manufactured goods of the variety reaching the villagers, once the road and transport system fans out still further. However, it would probably be a better proposition to pursue ways and means to settle them in terrain with which they are familiar, and whose produce suit them best. Since they are expert trappers of monkeys, it should be relatively easy to make them supply live monkeys for export to zoos and the like abroad, in case local sentiment and the Law do fall foul with such a venture. The Raute's skill in making some wooden objects should also enable them to contribute to such and related enterprise in an organized sector dealing with hand-art and manufacture of wooden utensils and implements.

SOME OTHER SUNDRY GROUPS OF THE MIDDLE HILLS AND VALLEYS

The SUNWAR and JIREL are small ethnic groups of eastern Nepal, and are believed to be related to Magars. The Sunwars not only resemble the Magars, they also speak a language similar to that of the Magars. However, the Jirel's language is more akin to that of the Sherpas. There are less than 20,000 of them put together. They are agriculturists by tradition, but many are in the army nowadays. Sunwars are becoming increasingly Hinduised, while Jirels stick to their old Buddhist ways.

The THAKALIS come from Thak Khola, the high valley of the Kali Gandaki (Narayani) River, in western Nepal. They are Mongoloid in appearance, and their language is of Tibeto-Burman origin, along with related dialects of the Gurungs and are by and large a trading community, and used to have some monopolistic hold over the salt trade. Their religion is a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism with others like Jhankrism and Bonpo.

The PANCHGAUNLE closely resemble the Thakalis in most ways, and even speak their language, but they are not actually Thakalis in many respects. Their religion is akin to that of Thakalis too. They live in the five villages of Panchgaun between Tukche and the riverside village of Kagbeni of Baragaun.

The CHEPANGS and the KUSUNDAS are the least known people of Nepal. It was only a hundred years ago that Brian Hodgson made a study relating to them. He found that they lived almost exclusively "on wild fruits and the produce of the chase". He added that the "Chepangs are a few degrees above their conferes, the Kusundas, and are beginning to hold some slight intercourse with civilized beings and to adopt the most simple of their arts and habits". Hodgson associated the Chepangs with the people of Bhutan called Lho, because of the close similarity between their languages. They cultivate land and also used to carry timber from the forest. All the important Hindu festivals are observed by the Chepangs, besides their own tribal festivals. They possess no artisan or artistic skills other than weaving of baskets and leaf umbrellas.

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The People of The Terai

The Terai lies along the Indo-Nepal border. Most of its people are of Indian origin, speaking languages akin to those spoken in the regions lying to its south in India. Indian religious and social customs are prevalent there. Maithili, Bengali and Bhojpuri are spoken in the east, and Hindi and Urdu in the west, in addition to a few indigenous languages such as Tharu, Danuwar, Dhangar and Satar. The religion (Hinduism and Islam), marriage practices and even ceremony to some extent vary according to ethnic groups and geographical affinity with corresponding regions across the political border in India. The Terai is flat land. Its altitude is barely more than 250 feet at any point. Average annual rainfall is between 40 and 60 inches. The climate is of the tropical monsoon type--very hot and wet during summer, with milder more pleasant winters. The land is very fertile alluvium, supporting rice, wheat, jute, sugar cane tobacco and various types of pulses

The social and economic organization of the people is similar to that of Brahmans, Chhetris and the occupational castes of the hill regions of Nepal, but by virtue of their Indian origin, their way of life is much more like that of North India than that of the Nepal hills. These border people have migrated up from India at various times in history, some 200 or 300 years ago and many, more recently. The vast majority of the people are Hindus. There are some Muslims too. The Hindus here are more orthodox and practise caste and social customs very strictly in the classical Indian Hindu tradition. Most of the Terai people, except those living to the northern-most stretches of Terai land comprising (mostly indigenous people like the Tharus and the Danuwar) move across the political border very freely for marriage and other socio-economic relations with those living in bordering regions of India.

Agriculture is the primary occupation in the Terai. Some areas have also been industrialised. The social organization of these agricultural communities is based on the Hindu occupational castes, a number of categories arranged in a vertical ladder of hierarchy. Caste status coincides almost exactly with economic status. The table of Hindu castes comprising more than 25 in all, is headed by Brahman, Bhuinar, Rajput, Kayastha and Nuniyar.

Brahmans, Rajputs & Occupational Castes

The Brahmans in the Terai fall into two groups: Maithili and Patra. The former are rich land owners, money lenders and zamindars. Some of them are in the higher ranks of civil service too. Patra Brahmans can act as priests only during the funeral ceremony and accept gifts given in the name of the dead. Bhuinars also are land owners, money lenders and zamindars. They claim the status of Brahmans, but are not accepted by others as such. They never act in the role of priests.

Rajputs are Kshatriyas, the traditional warriors of Hindu society. There are many sub-castes, all of whom have equal status, but subject to economic factors which decide social rating.

Kayastha are also land owners and money lenders, and also clerks of the rich, and therefore addressed as 'Diwanji' or 'Munimji'.

Nuniyars, also called 'baniyas', are traders and shop keepers. Dhanuks, Kurmis and Kewats work as personal attendants of rich Brahmans and Rajputs in the eastern Terai districts, where they are in a minority. In the districts to the west, there are many rich Kurmi zamindars. Dhanuk women also work as personal attendants to the women of rich Brahmans and Rajputs.

Gwalas keep cattle and sell milk, ghee and curd. They belong either to the Ahir or Yadav sub-caste. Hajams are professional barbers, and their women are employed in cutting the nails of women. The Mali is gardener-florist. Barais prepare 'pan' for their clients during weddings and other ceremonies. Haluwais or Kanus are confectioners, Mallahs are fishermen and boatmen, and also work as agricultural labourers. Koiri are vegetable growers. The Badahis are carpenters. The Lohars are ironmongers. Telis are oil pressers. The Kalwar and Sundhi are small general traders. Dhobis are washermen. Halkhors and Mesters and scavengers and sweepers. Dushad and Dom people are engaged for disposing of carcases, taking care of the cremation ground and selling wood for the funeral pyre. They are also engaged as agricultural labourers. Chamars work as menial servants outside the households. Tatmas and Khataves are agricultural labourers.

Most of these castes are interdependent for their occupation and livelihood. But such practices are changing gradually in many sectors.

THARU

The Tharu constitute one of the largest groups of people living in the Terai. There are more than 400,000 of them, and they live all along the length of the Terai, with a slightly heavier concentration in the middle and the west. The traditional terrain of the Tharus is known as Tharuwan or Tharwot, the forest land along the southern base of Shiva–lekh (Siwalik) mountain range and a little to its south extending into the Terai itself. They are probably among the oldest groups to inhabit the Terai, and wherever possible live as close to the heavily forested areas.

The Tharu language has greatly influenced by various north Indian languages of nearby Indian territory……Urdu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili and Bengali. The Tharus are short, dark and slim. They possess some Mongoloid physical characteristics too. There are some differences between the Tharus of west Terai nnd east Terai. The most striking instances of such differences are seen among those living in Morang, Chitwan and Dang.

Their origin is shrouded in obscurity. Some say they originated in the Thar desert, while some others link them with the forest tribes by associating the words, Tharu and 'var'...meaning inhabitants of the forests. Some Tharus themselves would like to be taken for emigrants from Rajputana's Chittore itself. Whatever be the truth, the Tharus have been in Nepal for a very long time. They have positive Mongoloid and some other ethnic admixtures in their physiognomic make-up.

Tharus are by tradition peasant farmers. Some of them are rich landlords, and a few in eastern Terai have taken up business for an occupation with success. But a great majority of them are very hard-working tenant cultivators. They make excellent hunters and elephant mahouts. They weave their own yarn and spin clothes. Domestic implements are made by themselves They have been theoretically divided into two main categories...Pradhan and Apradhan. Pradhans are of six different kinds and are all considered superior in social status to Apradhans. Apradhans are subdivided into 26 groups. There is however little difference in practice between the two major sects. Some of the sub-sects are Rana, Katharia, Dangvaria, Kochila, Chitwania, Lampucharwa etc. They live in Morang, Saptari, Mahottari, Dhanusa, Bara, Persa, Rautahat, Chitwan, Dang, Surkhet and Kailali Kanchanpur.

Their food consists of rice, dal, fish and meat. The Tharus of Chitwan do not like dal.

The Tharus are much influenced by Hinduism and have begun to accept Hindu deities, festivals and holy places as their own. Formerly they used to worship nature in its various manifestations. Even now this tradition is not wholly, extinct. They have their own local gods too, like the pipal tree, or the village god like 'Barma Baba'. Brahman priests are being used more and more in religious functions these days. In some places Risheswar also is worshipped. Other gods are Mahadev and Ghar-Chandi. In many religious functions wine and vermilion are used and pigeons, goats etc are offered as sacrifice. Vows and offers are made to various gods to eradicate epidemics and cure diseases. They also believe in the efficacy of sacred words in fighting diseases. Gods are made promises of many kinds to overcome misfortunes of any kind and even nightmares. This custom is known as 'bhakal'. Superstition of many kinds are rampant among Tharus.

Marriage ceremony itself has been influenced through association with many other kinds of people, and they observe divergent customs in different places. In Chitwan the sisters of the bride accompany the bride to her new home, where they spend two or three days. On the first day there, the bride cooks the food and her sisters help her do so. This custom is known as 'dulhibhatwan'. It means the bride has become a member of the new household. They are permitted to marry their elder brothers' widow. Divorce and widow marriage are practised, and so also polygamy.

A virgin bride is called 'byahi', while a widow or divorcee when married again is termed 'udhari'. The kept woman or a wife who has not done the 'bhatawan' is called 'suraitin'.

'Godana' or the custom of tattooing the female is believed to have been adopted from the Muslims, as an aid to guard her chastity. The people who believe this are Kochila Tharus of Dharmapur in Janakpur Zone. All Tharus believe that the 'godana' accompanies the dead to the land of the dead.

Women's ornaments include the bracelet, bangle, ear-ring, nose-ring, wristlet, amulet etc. They usually prefer to wear white clothes. In the western Terai, they wear the traditional dress. The male uses the 'dhoti' and 'kachad'. Some wear trousers (surwal), and turban, and local or Nepali cap is also worn by many. They also wear the 'labeda' as the people in Kathmandu do.

The Tharus sing different songs during different seasons and during work. In western Terai they sing songs of other communities too. And they speak a mixture of different languages, where their own particular dialect is not well developed.

Dhimal and Bodo

Tradition and folk lore say that the Dhimals are the progeny of 'Kirateswar'. They themselves claim that they are cousins of the Limbus, They do have many distinct Mongoloid physiognomic characteristics akin to those found in Limbus, but are darker in colour, owing probably to the humid tropical heat of the Terai. There are less than 10,000 of them, and most of them live in Mecchi Zone–Jhapa in particular. They associate freely with Bodo of the region and are one in most ways with them. Most of the Dhimal and Bodos are landless peasants and tenant cultivators for absentee land owners. A few own land themselves and some among the latter category are well to do farmers.

They used to be nomadic cultivators in olden days, but have settled down now in one place. They grow and eat rice, wheat and barley. They supplement their diet through the produce of meat and fish secured by hunting and fishing They do not keep many cattle, sheep or goats, nor are they very fond of milking cattle. There are a few people today who keep bullocks for ploughing and pulling carts. Many of them still love to live near forest land, and some sociologists term them 'forest-lovers'. Many among them have something in common with the northern hill people, where folk lore and folk sayings are concerned. There are even a few people who attribute their name 'Dhimal' to 'Himal', thereby trying to trace a link with the Himalayan mountain ranges in the ancient times.

The Dhimals are good at making simple handicraft goods like 'bhakari, doko, nanglo' etc., from bamboo. They offer food (pind-dan) and sacrifice cocks for the souls of their forefathers in the paddy field before harvesting the crop. On this occasion, they also take wine, meat and beaten rice (chura) to celebrate the season. When the new crop is harvested and brought home, the 'nwagi' ceremony is performed, in order to ensure a good harvest in the ensuing season too. Only then is the newly harvested rice eaten. Then again, a Dhimal would enter a newly constructed house only after the gods are duly propitiated. A priest pronounces his verdict about the house being inhabitable or not. A cock is sacrificed on this occasion.

A bride is either chosen by the parents of the groom or he himself might do so. If the latter is the case, the youth then proceeds to apologise to his elders for his act, and also throw a party with rice for the main meal. Beaten rice, pork and wine are offered to the invitees. Only then the marriage gets social recognition. But in most cases, the parents of the boy choose a bride for him. After the proposal is accepted, the youth goes to his future wife's house and gets acquainted with her and her people. Vermilion is nowadays applied on the bride's hair by the groom. Divorce and widow marriage are permitted by Dhimal society.

Like in other patriarchal communities, the male is given more importance than the female. If the first born is a boy, there is much rejoicing in the family.

The mother is confined to a dark room for days, after child birth. A respected old man of the community performs the naming ceremony of the child is observed after six months.

The Dhimals may be classified under three castes...Agnia, Lattar and Drangia. Some Rajbansis are known to marry into a Dhimal family, and then he ceases to be a Rajbansi and becomes a Dhimal himself.

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SATAR

The Satars of Nepal are believed to be the same people as the Santhals of Bihar in India. In Nepal they live mostly in Jhapa and Morang. There are less than 25,000 of them in all, and the number may be less even. Sociologists place the Satar or the Sataur in the ethnic group 'Hoer'. Many anthropologists say they are descendants of immigrants to India from outside. Some link their origin with the Dravidians, while there are others who believe they belonged to the 'lagol' group.

Most of them are landless peasantry, and cultivate very limited areas in jungle clearings. They are good hunters too. Even today they use the bow and arrow for such purposes. Some say they eat the meat of tigers, jackals, fox, deer etc. They do not generally milk their buffalos or cows, and do not drink milk.

The male most often wears the loin cloth (langoti) and keeps it rolled up towards the hips and waist. The women wear the 'ghangar' (frock).

Some wear the saree. But the blouse is seldom used. Ornaments made of bone and silver and bangles are worn by women.

The Satars worship many gods and goddesses, and the god 'Thakur' is considered the most powerful. The second in order of importance in 'Marad–baru'. Due to the influence of Hinduism in recent times, the Satars also worship Hindu deities like Durga, Kali etc.

Among them there are many different clans like 'Saren, Besara, Hasada, Mumu, Kikku, Hemran, Tudu' etc. Marriage between members of the same clan is prohibited. Such clans are known as 'gotras'. There are no very strict rules in regard to marriage. Choice of a bride by the boy himself or by his parents is most widely practised, while abduction is popular too. In the case of marriage by abduction the boy captures a girl of his choice in the market place or the field, and applies vermilion on her hair, which makes them man and wife. In other cases, the girl forces her way into the boy's house and lives there. Very often the members of the boy's family try to send her away, for which various means, some of them physically painful, are employed. The girl endures all this, until the boy's parents relent and extend their permission. Then she become their daughter–in–law.

Pregnancy before marriage is accepted as proof that the boy will formally accept the girl as wife.

The Satar women weaves cloth in their homes. They also make various articles from paddy stalk.

They observe many festivals. 'Soharai' and 'Bata' are the most important. These occasions are marked by singing, dancing, eating and drinking. Meat of the goat, pigeon and cock are eaten on the occasion, and wine is drunk.

The Satar's language has many words in common with those of the Limbus and Newars. They are a very simple people.

KUMALS

The Kumals of Chitwan, who live in the Dun region of the Inner Terai are not to be mistaken for the Kumale (Kumaley) of Nepal, who are professional potters, whereas the former constitute a clan or tribe. The literate among the Kumals claim that their ancestors had migrated to their present habitat from the Humre Custom Area of Gorkha District. Their physiognomic characteristics would appear to substantiate the fact that they might have been inhabitants of the hilly tracts originally.

The Kumals may be broadly classified into two different groups, the Purbia (those who live in the eastern region), and the [Paschime (those who live in the western region). There are 12 different sects in the former, while the latter has 7. Different Gotras are named Kasya, Karke, Pat Bade, Rato Tedli etc.

When a baby is born, the father invites his sister to name the new born child. This is known as the 'Nwaran' ritual. Then the clothes of the mother are washed clean by the father's sister. Other rites of purification are also performed by her. Meat is served in great abundance at the feast. The child is fed rice at the age of five months, after the performance of 'Chewor'. These customs are not mandatory and totally binding these days, since only those who wish to follow tradition and also are capable of doing so, adhere to the practice today.

Marriages do not take place between a girl and a boy who are related, or belonging to the same Gotra. The groom's party asks the bride's people for her hand in marriage. Once the negotiations are conducted, gifts consisting of pigs and goats are made on the bride's behalf to the other party. Then the bride and the groom exchange visits.

There is no traditional custom that enjoins the necessity to invite a priest to conduct the wedding ceremony. Families who are well off make gifts of ornaments to the newly wed couple. After three or four days, the bride and groom go back to the girl's house. This is known as 'Dulhan' (return of the bride). Musical instruments are played usually, on this occasion.

According to tradition, a girl can marry twice. However a twice-married woman loses much prestige in her community. If she marries a third time, she is relegated to a lower order in the society. Marriages are most often conducted between members of the same clan.

The Kumals belong in the Hindu religious fold. Kasi Brahmans conduct religious ceremonies. The Kumals worship many Hindu gods and goddesses including Jala Devi, Genesha Sthan and Aaitabari.

They are fond of entertainment, and dancing and music are popular with them. The most popular dance is 'Maruni', which is performed to the accompaniment of the playing of the 'Madal'. Other popular musical instruments include Damaha, Sanai, Khyangro, Dholaki, Nara Singha, Karnal and Jhyalu.

A person who dies in the Kumal family is treated as the family deity, and is worshipped once a year. The dead body is cremated. The son and son–in–law of the dead person carries the dead body to the crematorimum. The members of the bereaved family abstain from eating salt for eight days. After this period, a feast is held. The members of the bereaved family and relatives participate in the feast. With that the 'Kriya' (rites relating to the death and burial) comes to an end.

The primary occupation of the Kumals is agriculture, while fishing also is one of their pursuits in the search for a living. Many of them live in the agricultural belt of the Terai, and this has tended to make them concentrate more than ever before on cultivation. The Kumal fishermen weave the fishing nets themselves.

Their standard of living and economic condition are not too good. They are still backward as a society. They are of a friendly and amiable nature. Their culture is in many ways of an independent nature, although in recent times, the growth of tourism has tended to inject a few new trends in their way of life and thinking. Some Kumals are now-a-days seen performing pance and music turns before visitors from abroad.

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Other Sundry Groups of the Terai

DANUWAR, MAJHI AND DARAI are among the indigenous people of Nepal, like the Tharus. They have striking cultural and physical similarities to the Tharus and inhabit neighbouring regions in the Terai forests and inner valleys. They might have been living in Nepal for at least a few thousand years. They could belong to a group of aboriginal races inhabiting other more or less secluded regions of India. Living close to them along the river valleys are people called Barhamu and Kumhale, farmers and potters respectivaly. They appear more Mongoloid than Danuwars, Darais and Majhis, who are dark and bony. The farmer group speak a distinct Tibeto-Burman tongue.

DHANGARS are only some 10,000 in number and have been living for ages in certain parts of the eastern Terai. They are apparently the same people as the Bhitwa of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Their languages have some similarity even today. In

Nepal they live scattered in the river basins in the area between Sarlahi and Morang districts. They are agriculturists, but their produce is hardly sufficient for their own sustenance. Most of them are agricultural labourers.

MUSSALMANS arrived in Kathmandu for the first time from Kashmir as traders in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is believed that they were purveyors of rugs, shawls and woollen goods, and they travelled back and forth from Kashmir to Lhasa via Ladakh. A few of them were invited into Nepal by a royal envoy, and as soon as they arrived here, they moved into the western hills, and were locally known as 'churaute' or bangle sellers. The Mussalmans of western Terai speak Urdu, while those in the western hills speak Nepali, and those living in other parts of Nepal are much influenced by the local tongues. There are about 300,000 of them in Nepal.

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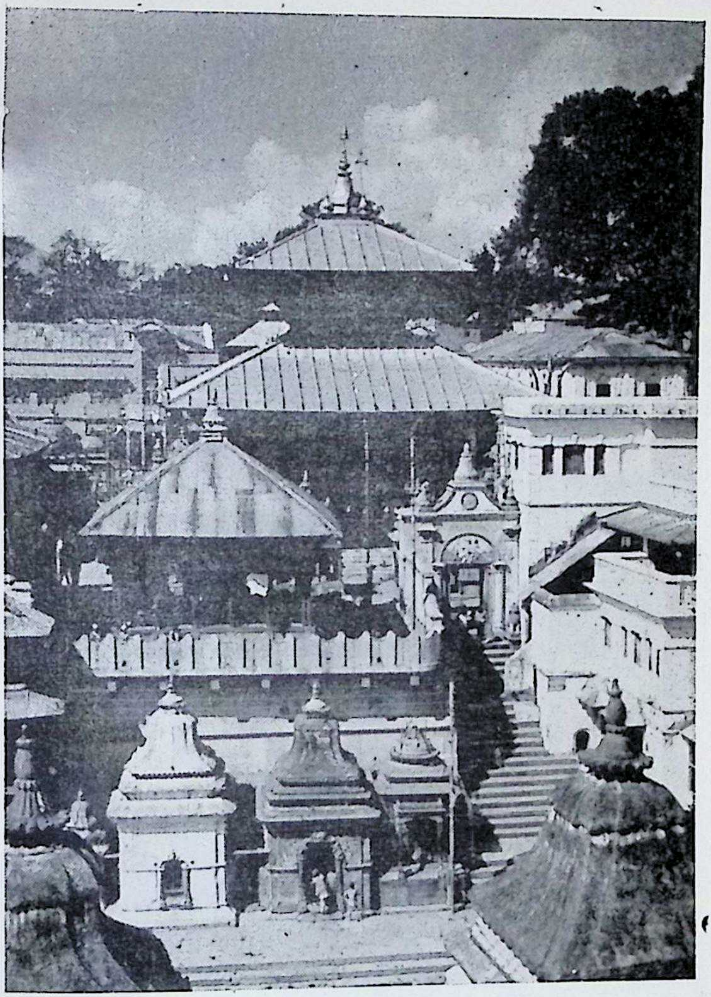
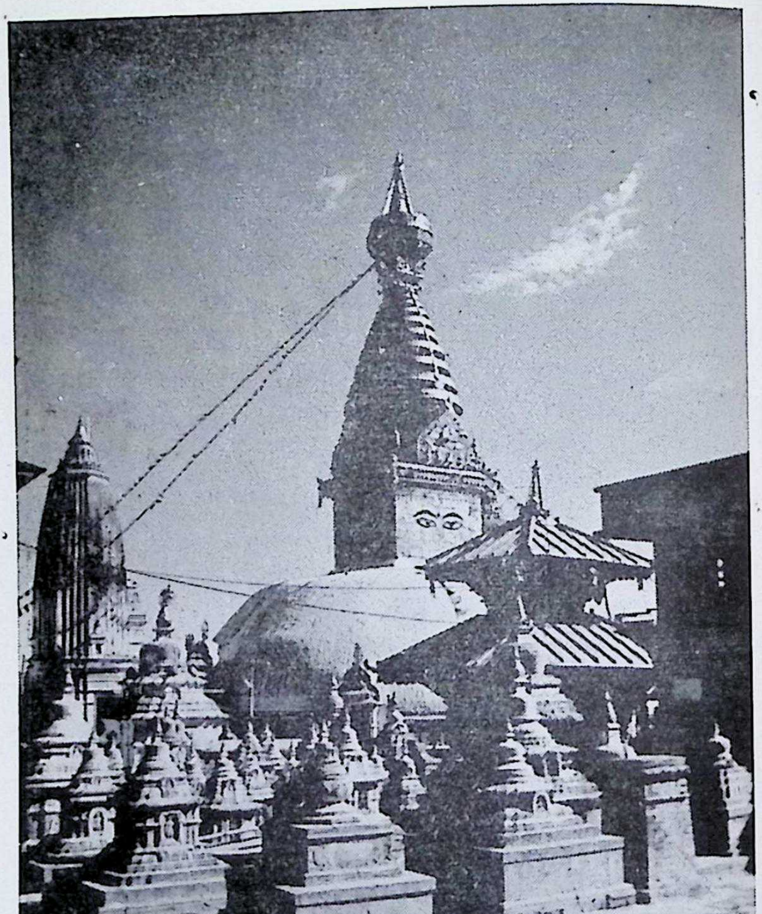
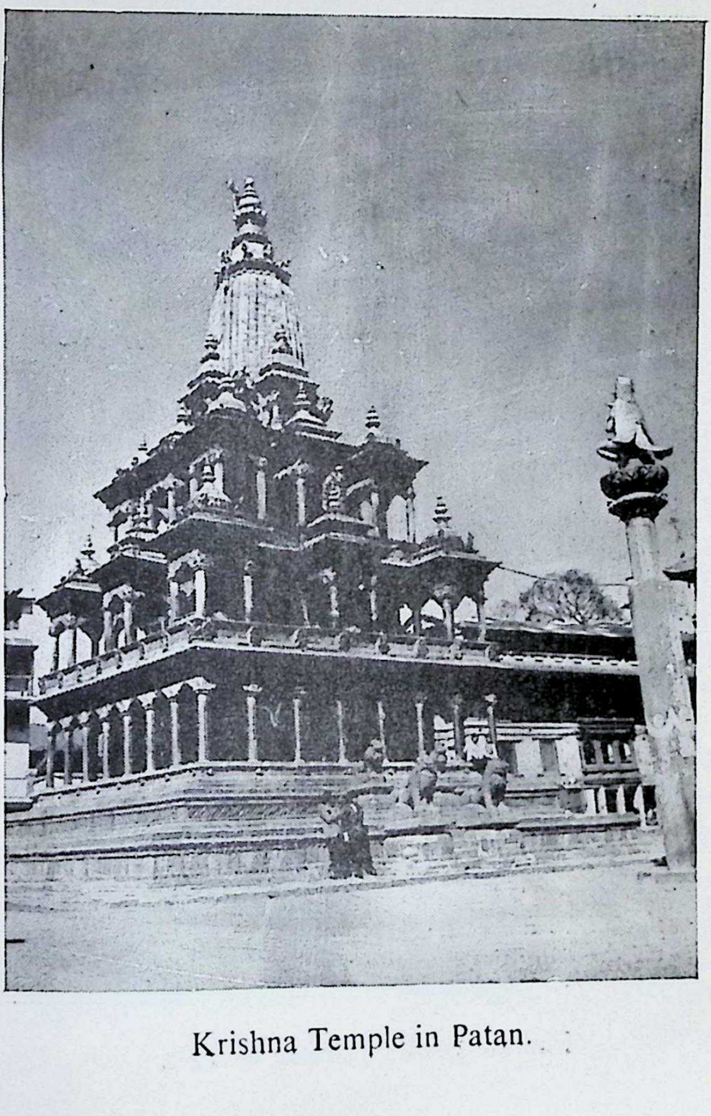


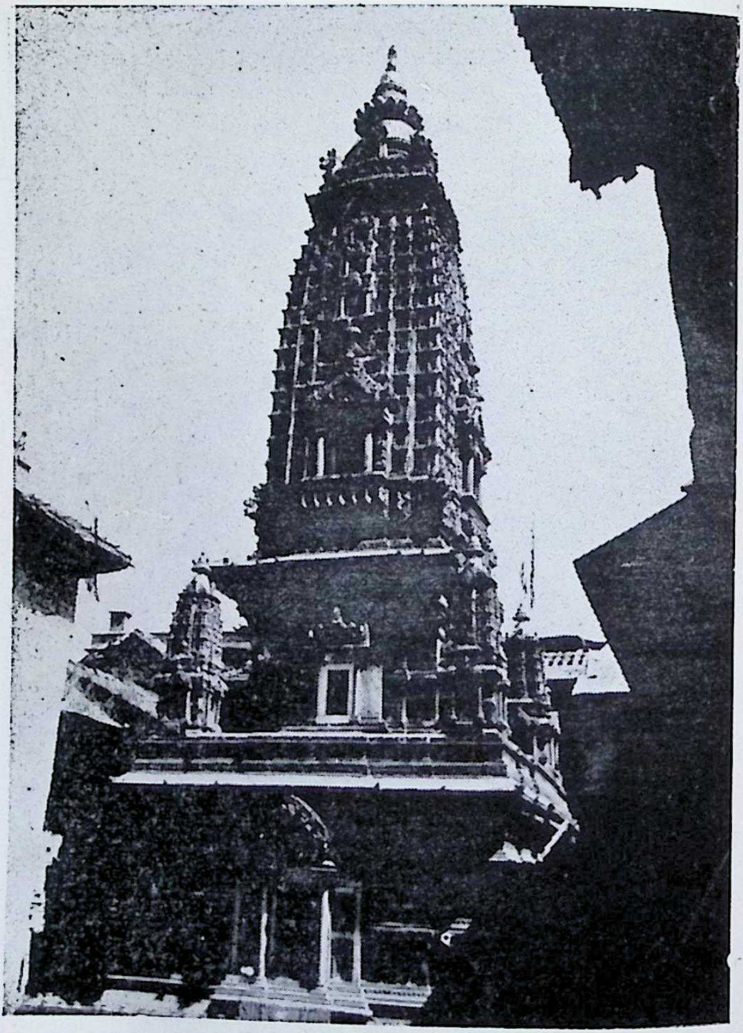
A view of Pashupati Nath temple from the eastern side.



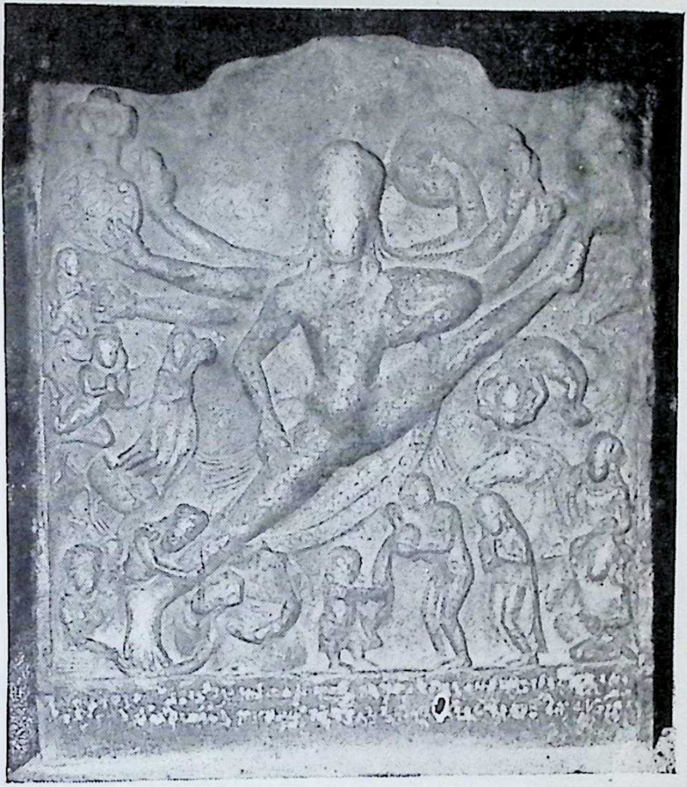
A view of Swayambhoo Nath Stupa.



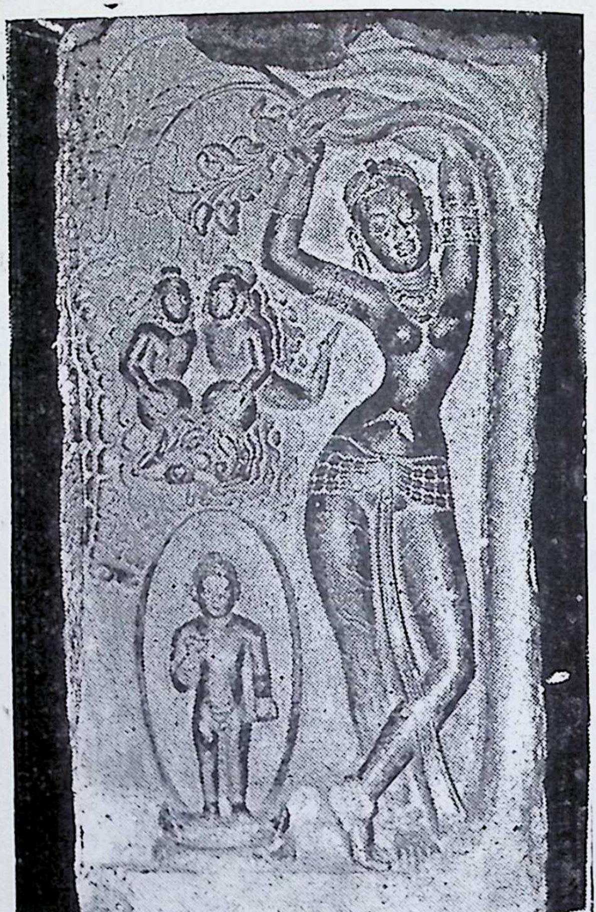
Krishna Temple in Patan.



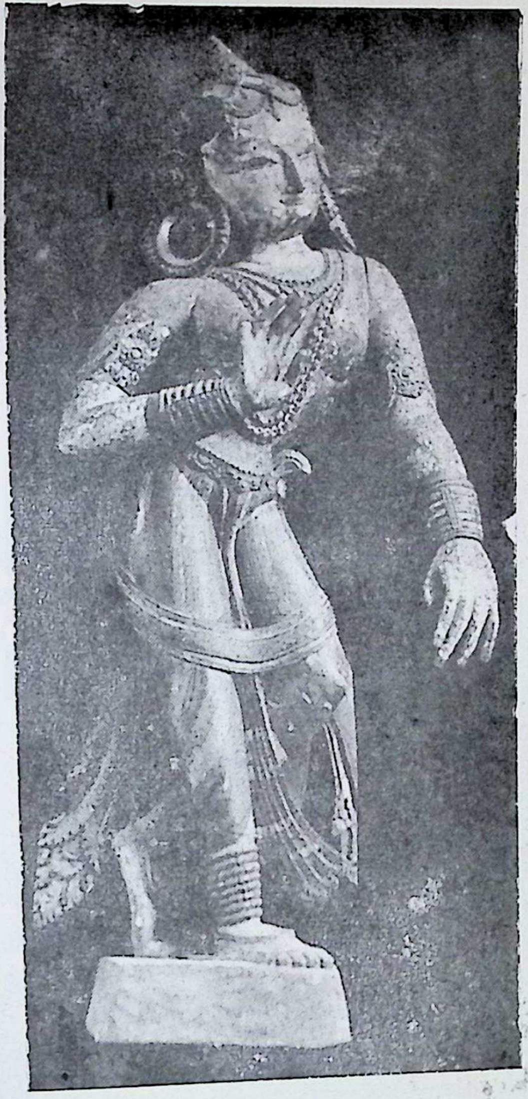
Mahabouddha Temple in Patan.



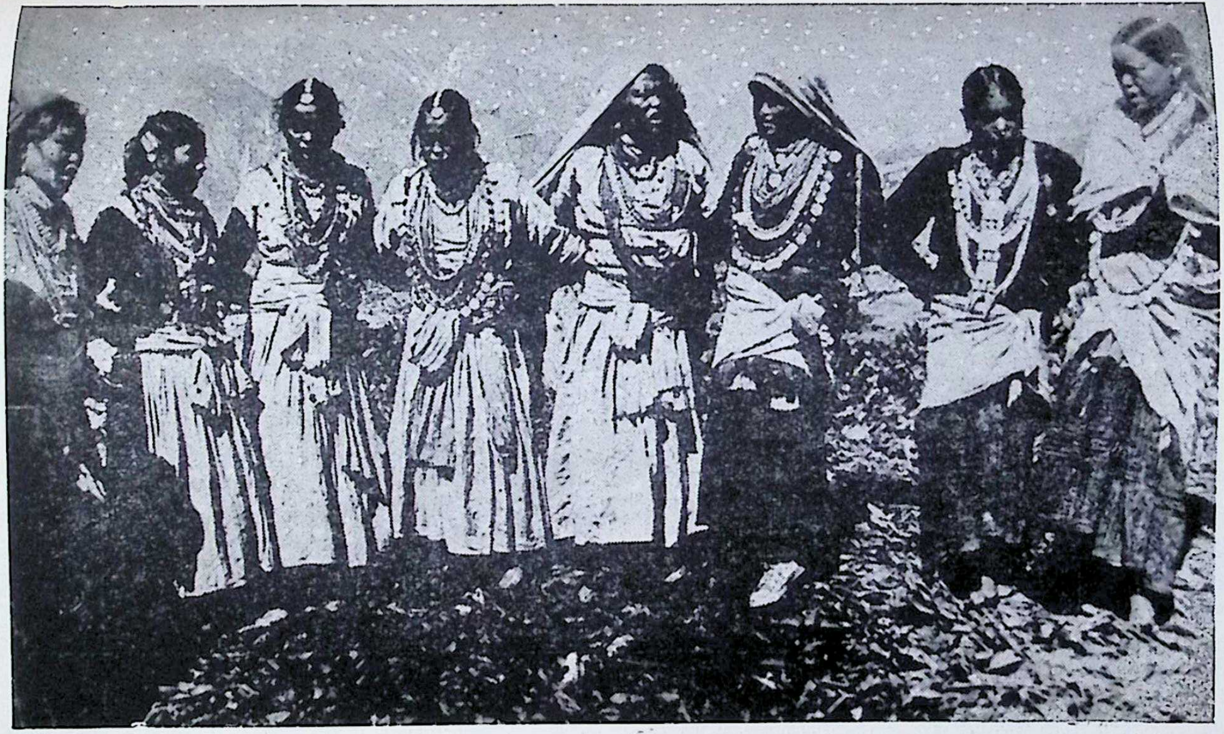
Vishnu Vikranta.
Stone–Dated 467. A. D.
Size: 66 × 77 cm.
(Earliest dated Sculpture of Nepal)



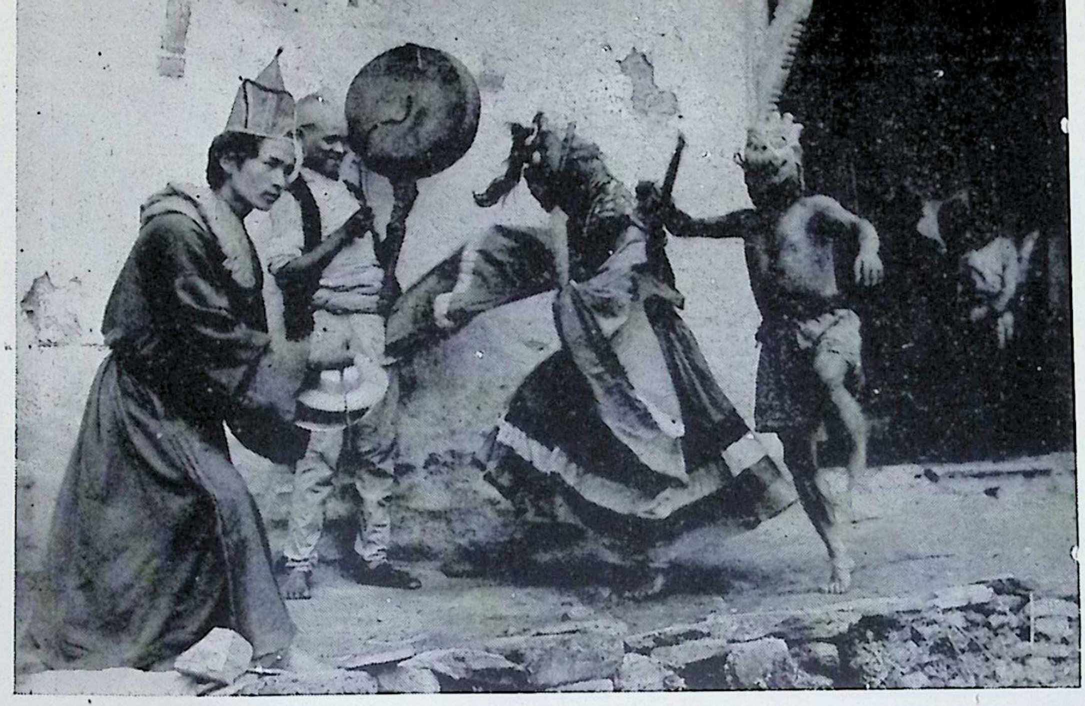
[illegible] Nativity of Lord Buddha
Lime Stone
9th Century A. D.
Size: 80 × 100 cm.



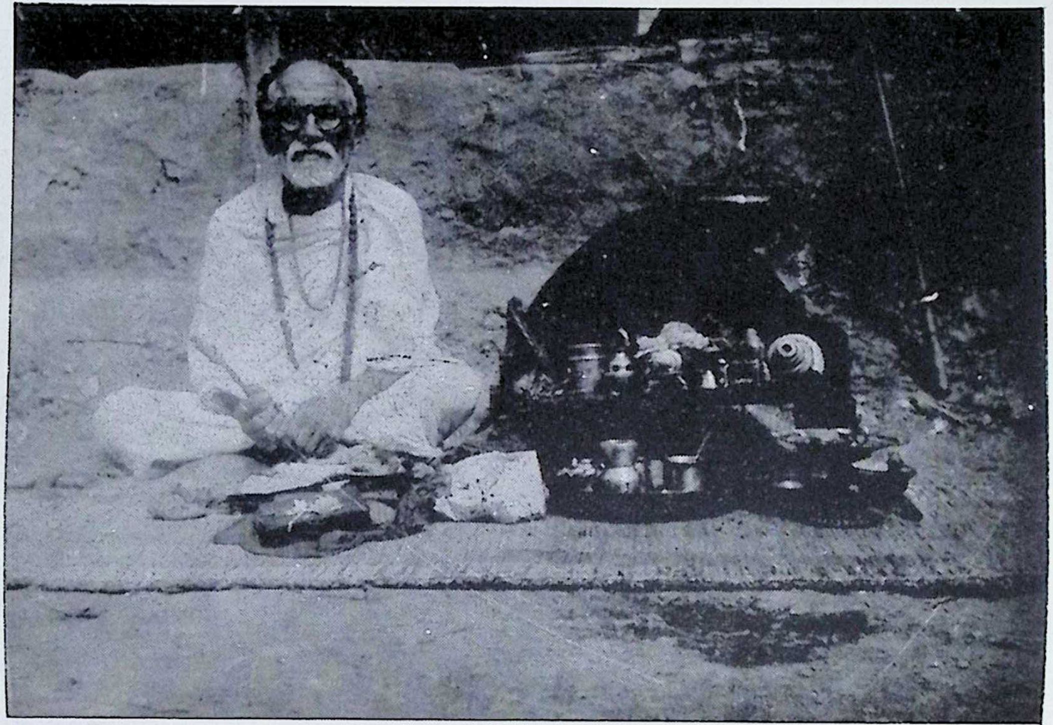
Nritya Devi
wood
15th Century A.D.
Size: 34-12 cm.



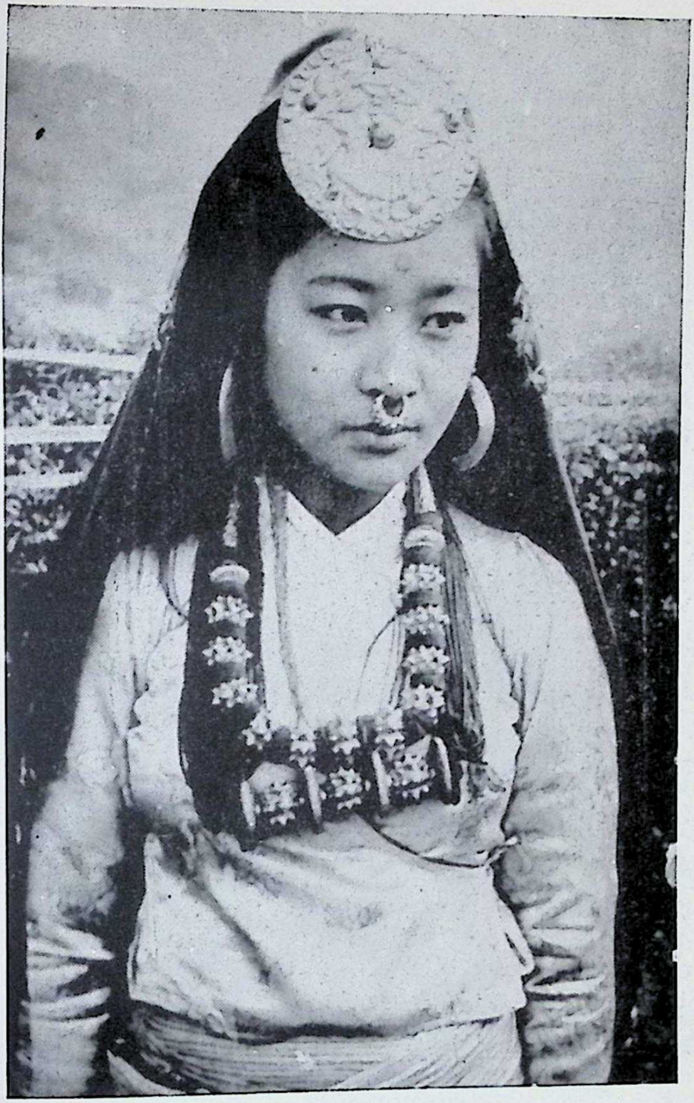
A mountain Group Dance.



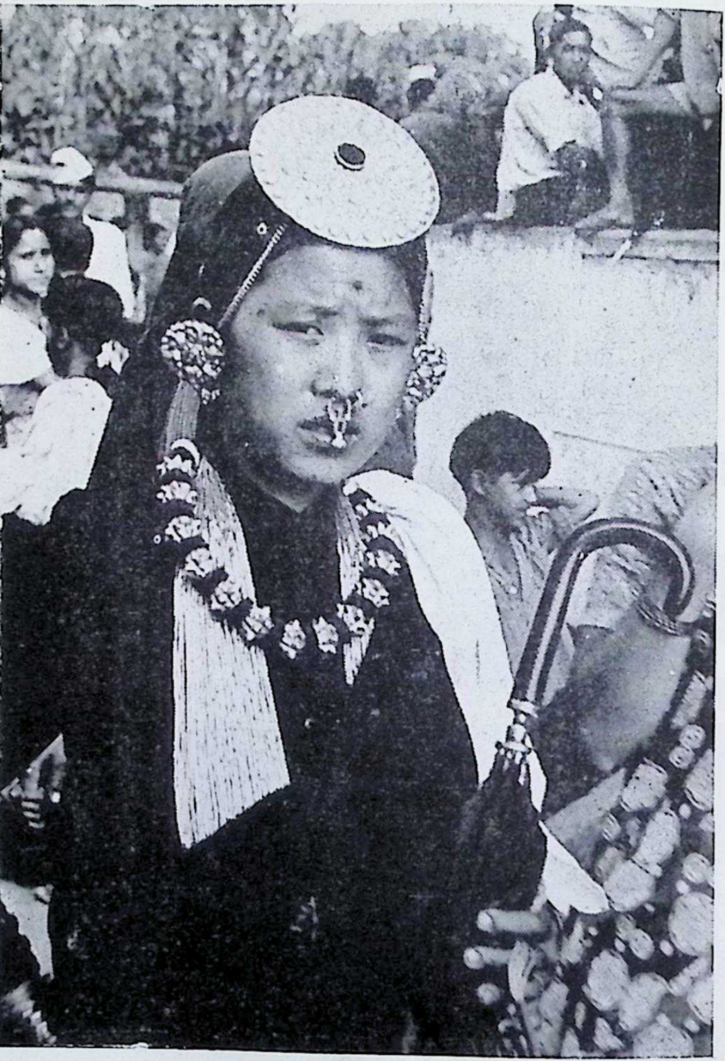
A religious dance at Urgeling Gumba in Dharpa



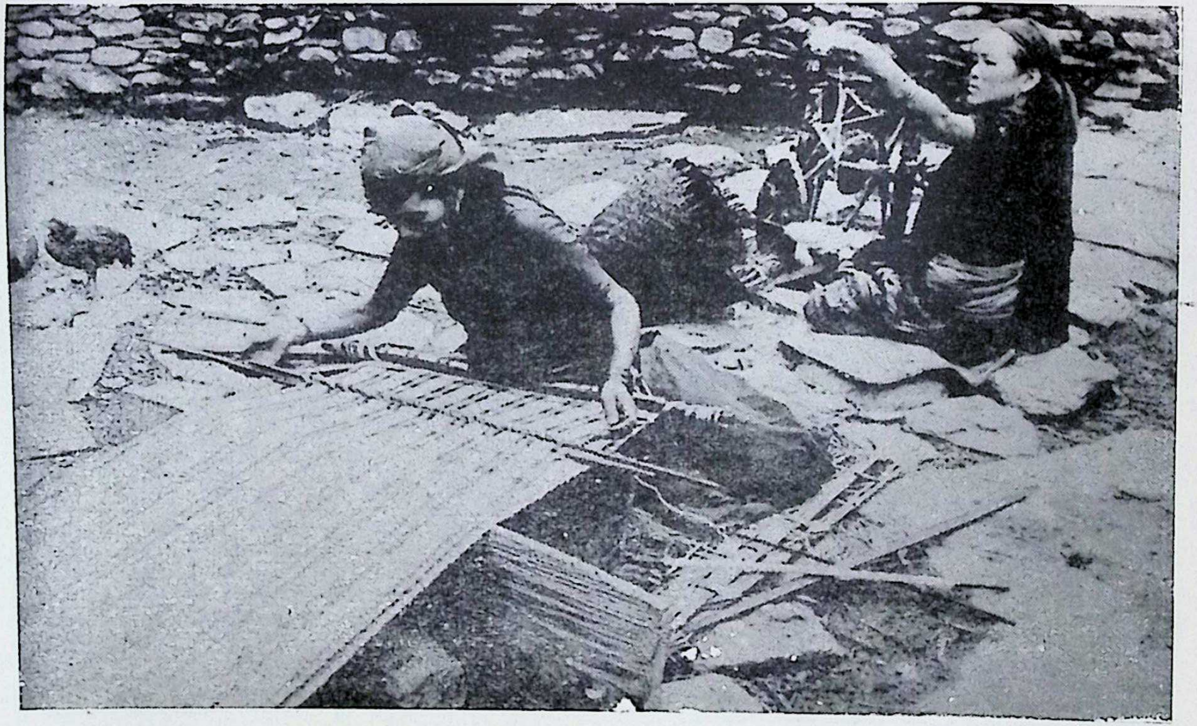
A Brahman priest worshipping in a mountain village.



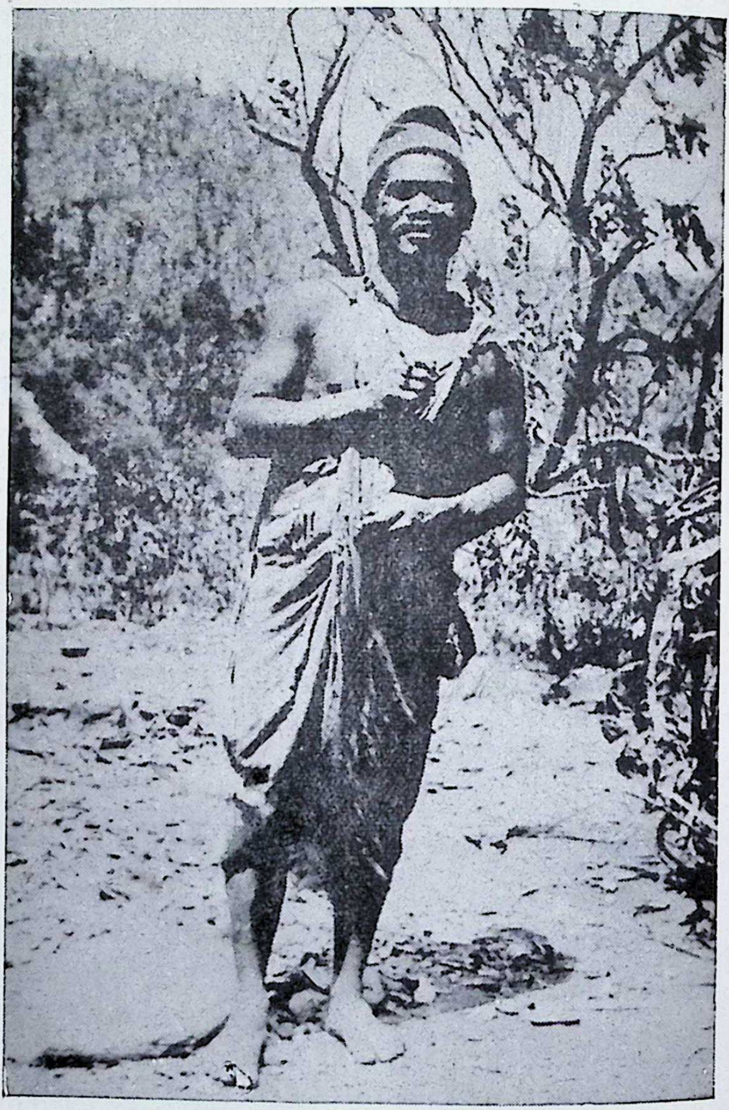
A Limbu girl



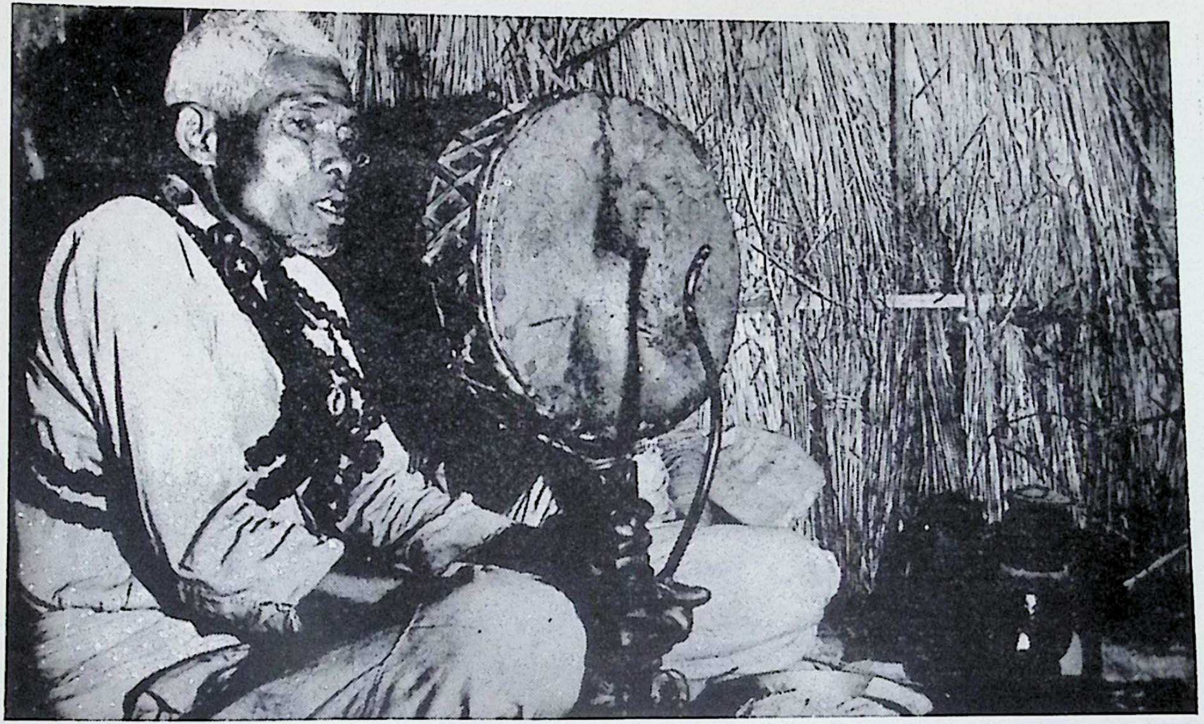
A Gurung young woman



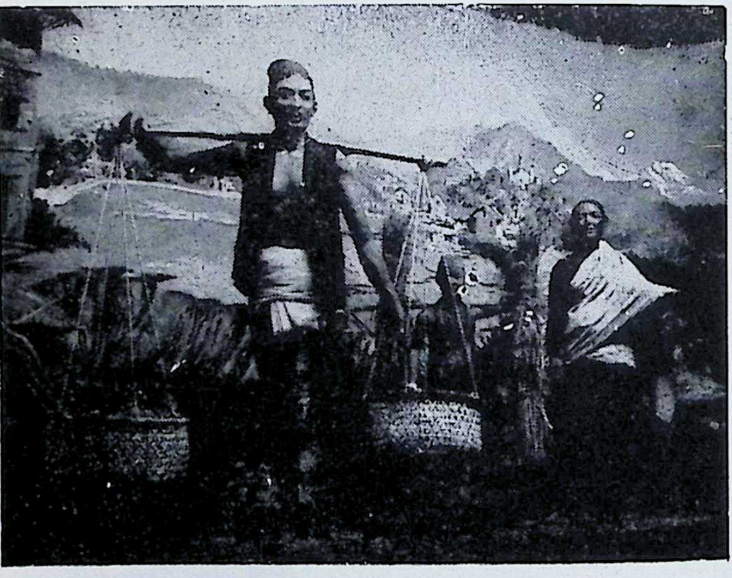
Gurung women weaving their traditional "Radi," a kind of carpet



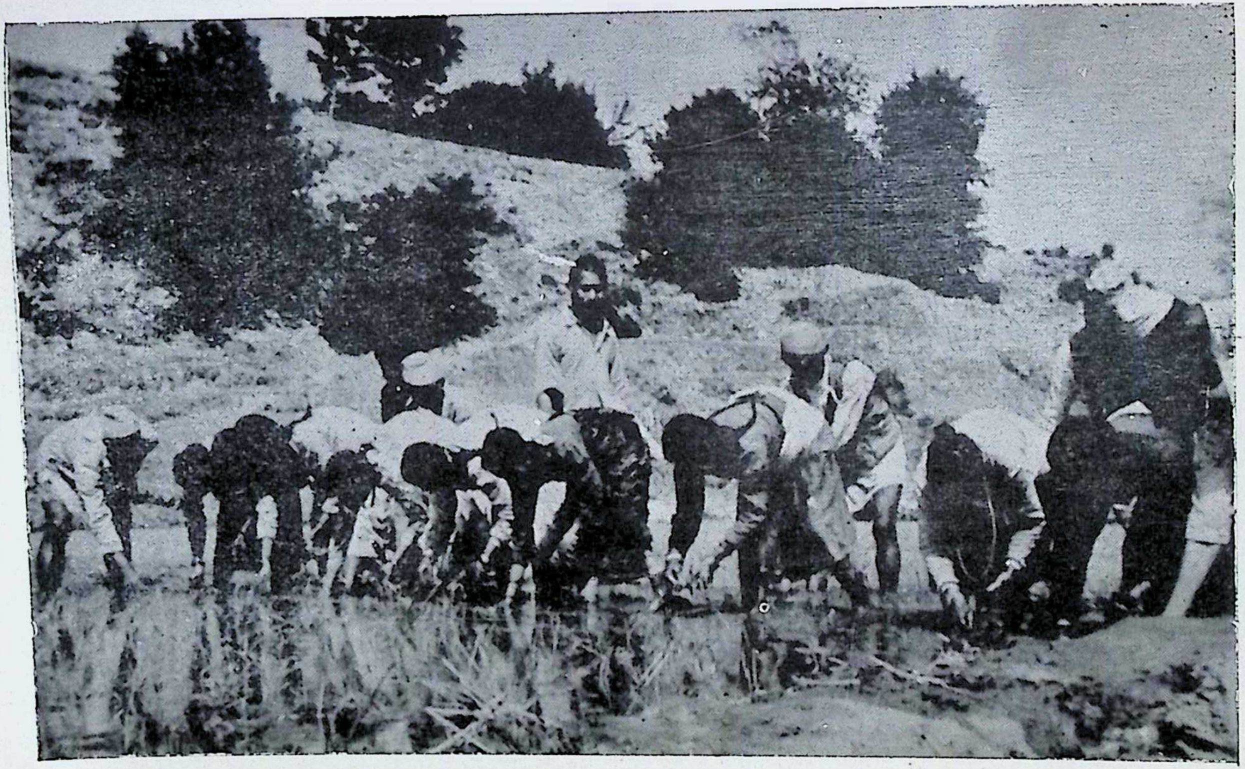
A Raute youth



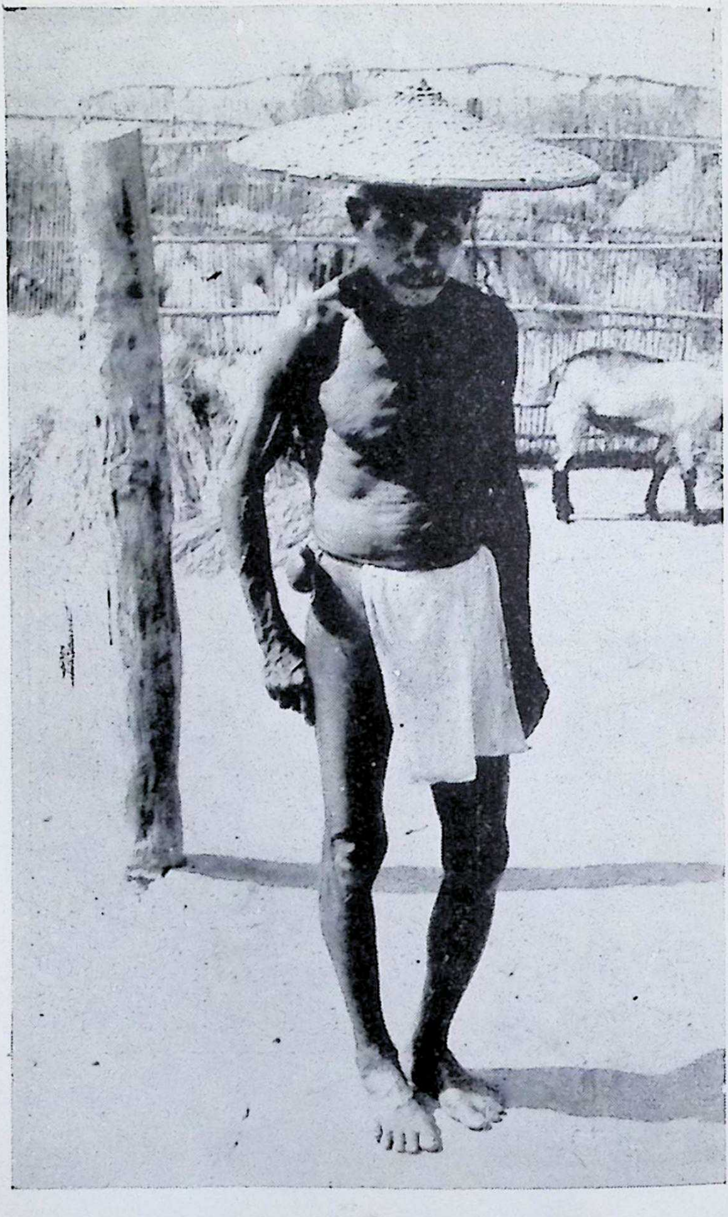
A witch doctor (Jhankre)



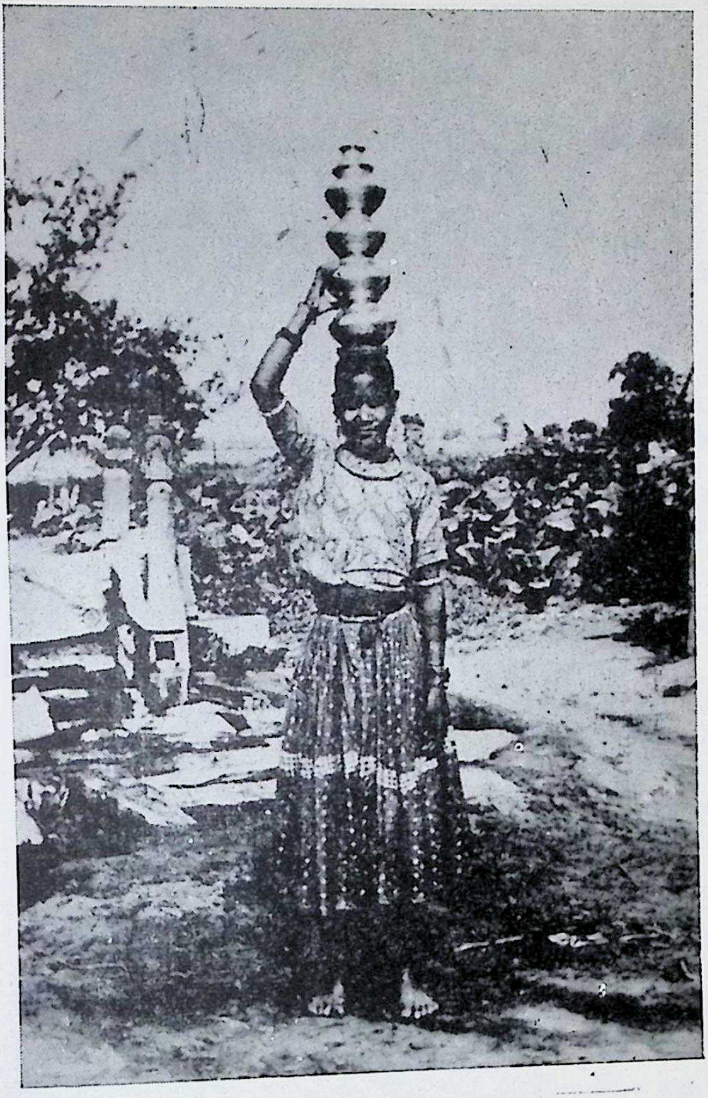
The Jyapoos of Kathmandu Valley



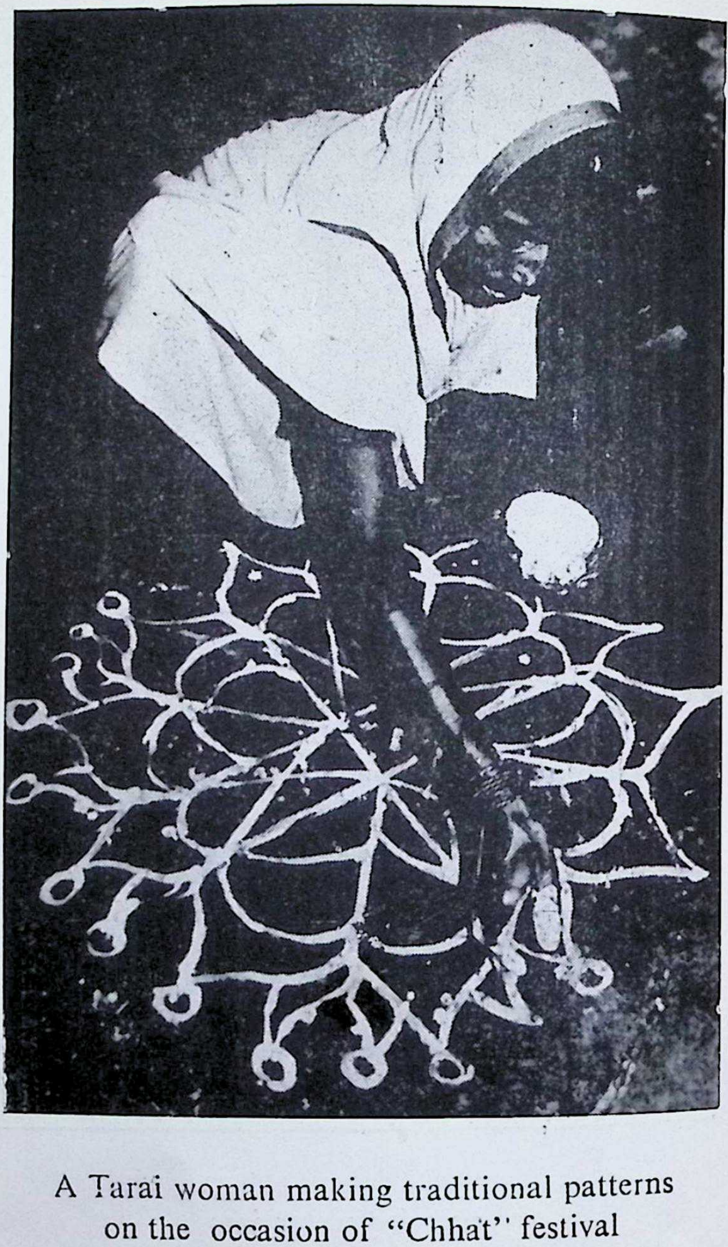
Paddy plantation in Kathmandu Valley.



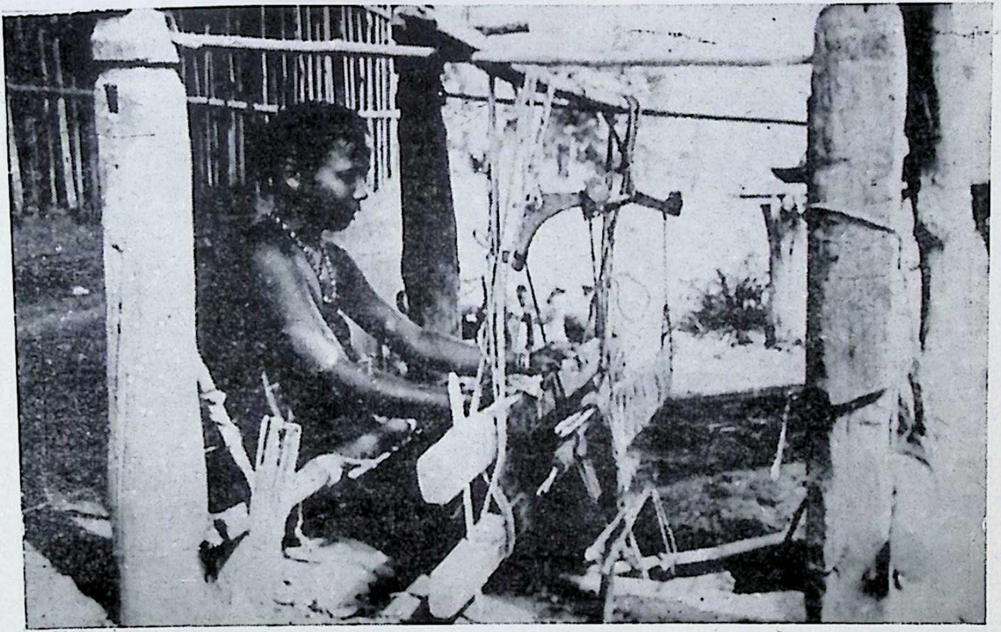
A typical Tharu old man from Chitawan.



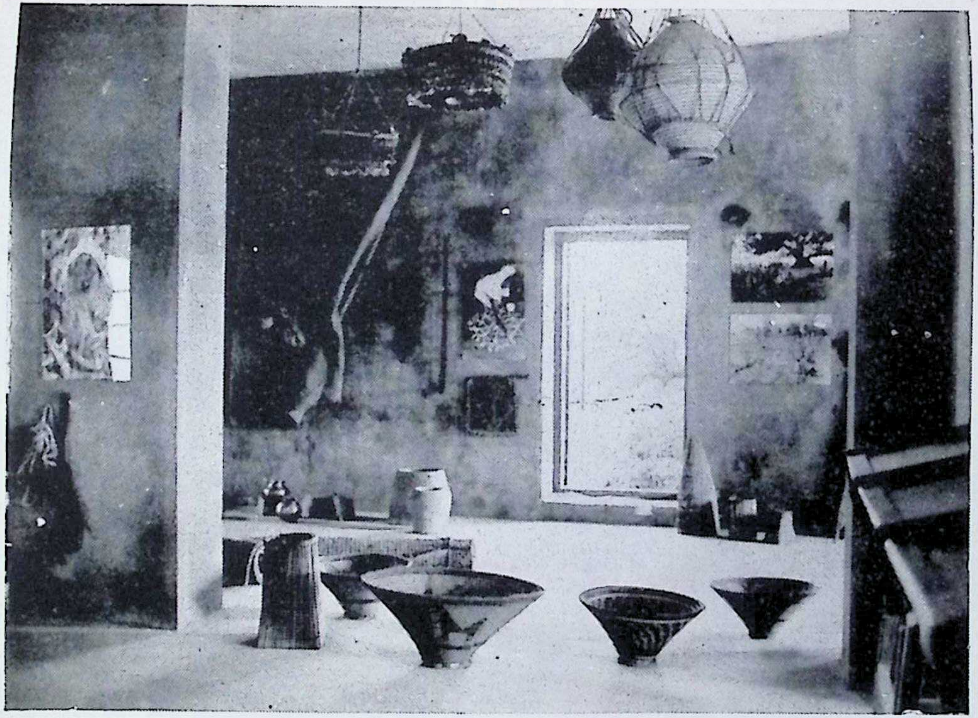
A Tharu girl from western Nepal carrying water jars



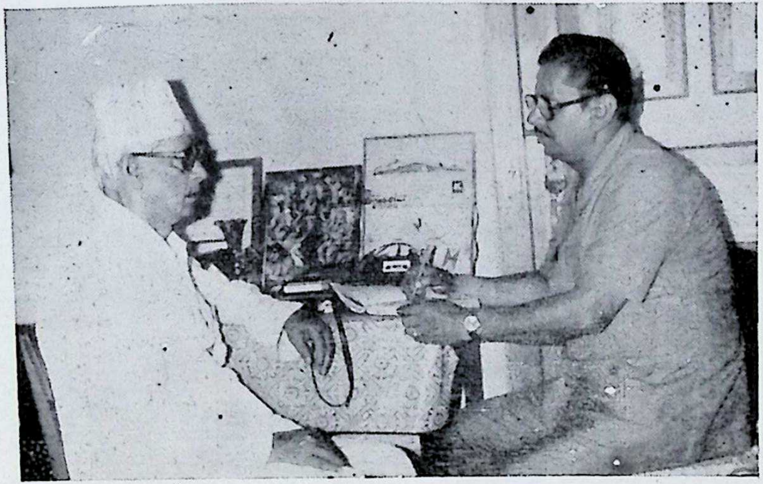
A Tarai woman making traditional patterns on the occasion of "Chhat" festival



A Dhimal woman weaving her 'Petano'.



A display of utensils and other materials
of household use in Tarai.



The author interviewing Shri. S.B Dwivedi

The author (with spect) with the Tharus of Chitawan who helped in taking extensive survey of the ethnic groups of that area.

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